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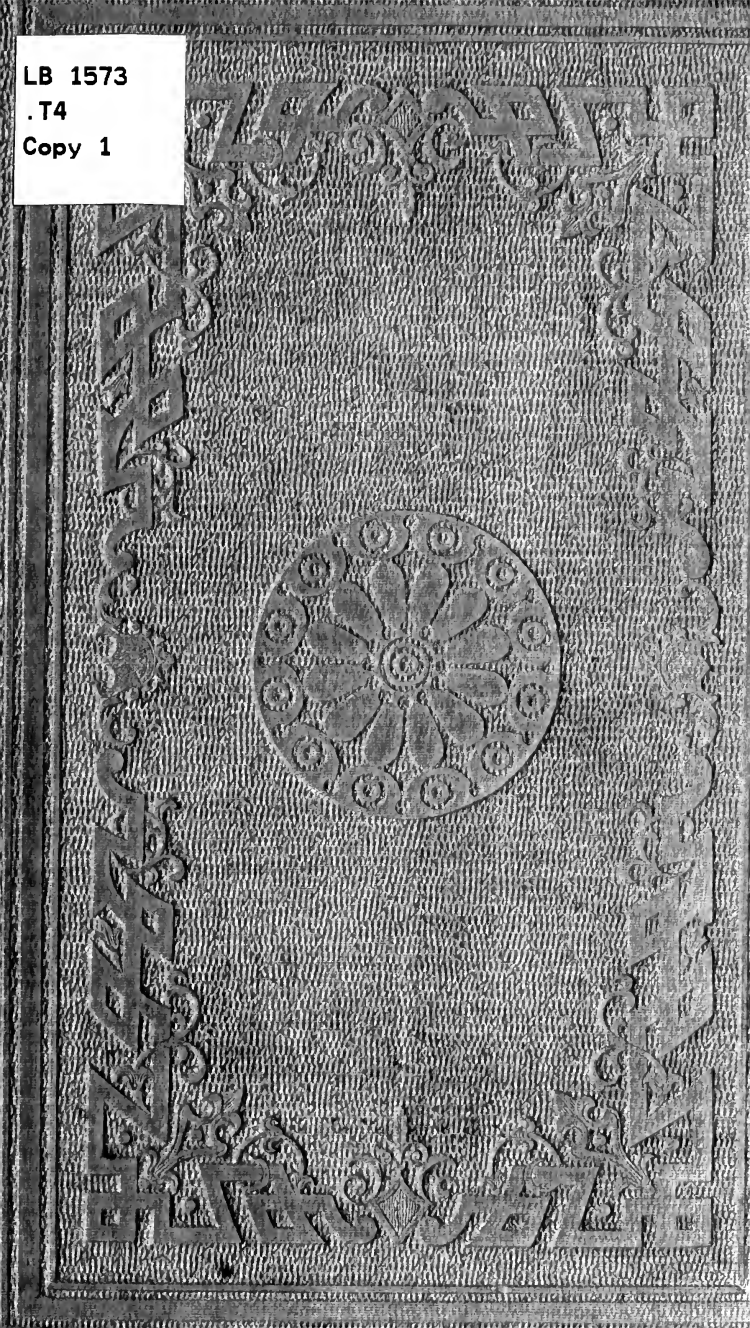

Class LB1573
Book T4

THE TRUE PHILOSOPHY

OF

TEACHING THE YOUNG TO READ;

INCLUDING

THE ALPHABET, SPELLING, AND ELEMENTARY SOUNDS
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

AN ENTIRELY NEW SYSTEM,

ESPECIALLY ADAPTED FOR DULL AND BACKWARD SCHOLARS.

Designed for the use of Schools and Families.

A MANUAL FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND GUARDIANS.

BY PROF. JOHN DICKINSON TEFFT.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY TIBBALS & CO.,
No. 118 Nassau Street.

1858.

Deposited in Clerks Office for Dis
New York Dec 11, 1858

LB1573
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TO THE

SCHOOL TEACHERS

AND PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN, AND BRITISH AMERICA.

FRIENDS OF HUMANITY:

On you the interests of science and the general diffusion of knowledge depend. You hold stations far more important to your respective nations than their governmental functionaries; for it is by YOU that your professional characters, your magistrates, your legislators, the judges of your courts, your ambassadors to foreign nations, and the official dignitaries of your governments are trained up, and receive, through a nation of freemen whom you have enlightened, their distinguished appointments. The illumination which you disseminate is both the CORNER-STONE and PALLADIUM of the liberty, the independence, the prosperity, the felicity, and the glory of your happy countries. To YOU the eyes of their children are directed, as the parents, the trustees, the guardians of all their most valuable rights, of all their fondest and proudest hopes. Lodged in YOUR hands and subject to YOUR influence are the destinies of your rising

empires. KNOWLEDGE HAS THE SOVEREIGN CONTROL OF POWER. The head rules the whole body. The mind sets in motion and regulates the machine. It is by intellectual energies that man rises to the dignity of his nature, that nations achieve their independence, triumph over the obstacles to their prosperity, smooth the path of general and individual happiness, obtain and secure immortal glory. But before men of intelligence and science, it belongs not to ME to expatiate upon the importance of knowledge to the individual, or of its general diffusion to the prosperity and felicity of nations. Nor is it necessary to state to men of your information the grade in which primary instruction, in reading and spelling and the best mode of teaching it to the best advantage, necessarily ranks, as in its early and thorough acquirement depend in a great degree the acquisition of all or many other useful sciences. And it is believed that the facilities set forth in "THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING THE YOUNG TO READ" are such as will lessen the toils both of the teacher and pupil to that degree that more than one-half the labor, the time, and expense formerly had in learning to read will be saved, to be devoted to other studies or employments; and that when this system shall be fully appreciated, none will be found in all your vast empires unable to read, who are not deprived of the common faculties of the human mind, or forbidden the liberty of doing so. And it is thought it will save more treasure and be productive of more happiness in the instruction of youth to all coming time than all the gold of California or Australia.

FRIENDS OF FREEDOM:

I present for the illumination of your SONS and DAUGHTERS "THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING THE YOUNG TO READ." It is the liberty, the independence of the mind from scholastic shackles which I bring. Have the kindness to accept it as a legacy of love bequeathed to you and your children forever.

With the respect of veneration and the devotions of friendship,

Your younger brother,

JOHN D. TEFFT.

REMSEN, Oneida Co., N. Y.,
September, 1858.

INTRODUCTION.

ALL the systems heretofore and now in use to teach the young to read may be considered as *indirect.* Every observant teacher has keenly felt the want of *a direct System of Instruction*, when he has beheld the helpless condition of those who are learning to read. No scholar, let him be young or old, rich or poor, bond or free, native or foreign, can of himself study to effect for a long time after he begins the study of the English language. He ever needs a System of Direct Instruction for a considerable time before he is truly able to help himself. More than one half of a scholar's time is worse than thrown away by not teaching him in a direct manner. Yea, more than this, we break down the very energies of his soul by requiring him to do that which he is unable to perform, and is known by all to be an impossibility for him to accomplish, and, by not giving him *direct* instruction when he can receive and appreciate no other. Hence the dislike for going to school so generally manifested by children. Here is where almost every child takes the first great lesson in immorality. They cannot do what the teacher and parents are required by custom to exact of them, and

they are compelled to resort to all manner of duplicity, tricks, lies and hypocrisy, in order to get along and be considered anything by those they are trying to please, and after they have done all in their power and worried half their young life away, they are frequently called, dull lazy blockheads, and the like, which only serves to sink them still lower. Hear it, ye parents—have you not sent your little son or daughter to school and in a few short months seen his whole moral nature changed? The blame lies in the system of instruction which is pursued, and not in the teacher or school. I do most religiously believe, that a direct system of instruction, introduced into our schools, would be next to the preaching of the Gospel for promoting good morals. Truly none but children would submit to such an absurdity as is generally imposed on young pupils attening our schools, sitting months and years holding books in their hands to little or no purpose but to paralyze their physical and mental energies. It would require a guard much larger than the united force of the armies and navies of the United States, Great Britain and France, to keep *men* in our schools in the position we keep our young scholars. Let us free our children from this long sanctioned oppression, and the present and all future generations will rise up and call us blessed. In order to teach children to name and distinguish natural objects we first call their attention to each separate object; we then tell them its name and point out to them its distinctive features. In this way they are soon enabled to call the name and to distinguish each object brought to their observation. My theory for teaching the young to read is based on this principle. In teaching the letters, the letter is first presented to the eye,

when the teacher declares its name and points out to the attentive beholder its distinctive features. In teaching words, the word is first presented to the eye, it is then pronounced by the teacher, when the scholar reads it by its letters and syllables and pronounces it, the teacher aiding him to do so whenever he fails to accomplish it. In teaching the vowel and diphthongal sounds, a variety of exercises are had on the same principle in connection with teaching the words, which enables the learner to become acquainted with the elementary sounds of the English language, an attainment to which our schools have never yet arrived.

My aim is the communication of important truth never yet divulged, for the advantage of the present and succeeding generations. And if this New System does not disencumber the Old Indirect System of instruction of a huge mass of scholastic rubbish, falsehood and nonsense, and show itself to be a plain, simple, rational and consistent system of instruction of incomparably more easy attainment, let it be condemned without benefit of clergy. I claim nothing for the authorship of this work, but beg the indulgence and charity of a Christian public towards it in this respect; but for the truth and infinite importance and necessity of the *system* I yield nothing. I make my appeal not to that stupid bigoted class of prejudiced men, who always start at novelty and forthwith brand as heresy every deviation from long received notions, but to the candid who rejoice at improvement, and to the truly learned who, while they are disposed to scrutinize and are competent to judge, will not condemn without being able to assign a reason.

I have long wished that some able pen, protected by commanding influence, would take this subject in hand;

but having waited in vain more than twenty years for a writer of this description to make his appearance, and finding that every new system of instruction retails the trumpery and falsehood of preceding authors, my patience is finally exhausted, and with all my embarrassments about me, I proceed in obedience to TRUTH, and without stopping to make apologies, to pursue a hitherto untrodden path, relying upon the good sense of my fellow citizens to accept this proffer of my labors, which have no other object than the dissemination of truth, the honor of my country, and the benefit of the present and succeeding generations.

I conclude this introduction by saying, that teachers will find the examples showing the manner of classing schools, the manner of teaching the alphabet, the words, the vowel and diphthongal sounds, also the various reading exercises, both of words and sentences, to be full, plainly showing the teacher their perfect adaptation in different schools and classes, so as to gain the greatest amount of time in teaching and save an equal amount of time in learning, which is an important feature in this system. To which will be added the method of teaching the pauses and marks used in writing and printing, also a variety of reading exercises for young and advanced reading classes; together with a short history of the discovery of the Direct System, showing its progress and triumph for more than twenty years in schools taught by myself and others.

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THE TRUE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING.

INVESTIGATION OF THE

PRESENT METHOD OF TEACHING.

The faculty of reading is considered one of the most important attainments of the human mind. Its value is so great as a medium of conveying knowledge, that it becomes almost as useful to the well being of man as the sense of seeing or hearing. In such high estimation is it held in civilized communities that no time or expense within our power is withheld from its attainment. State governments and corporations are constantly making large investments for educational purposes. Normal schools are established at vast expense for the education of teachers, and teachers' associations are formed in almost every State and community, in order to advance the cause of education. And yet, after all this vast outlay

and effort, there is none satisfied with the result. It has become apparent to all, that it is not because there is not sufficient encouragement given or not enough labor bestowed, but it is generally considered for the want of *efficient* teachers. Very well, then, I think we have *nearly* got at the cause why we have no better success; but before we make teachers to be the scape-goats for this enormous sin, let us examine this subject, and see if they are the cause of this vast disappointment with which they are charged. And here permit me to say I have been a school teacher more than thirty years, and I believe the teachers that have been and still are employed are as faithful and devoted to their calling as any other class of men in the community. The cause of their inefficiency, then, arises from other causes than a want of faithfulness on their part, or a sufficient amount of learning and ability in general. Cannot the cause be found in some erroneous method or system had in our schools, which we have astonishingly overlooked, and the effects of which we are beginning so deeply to feel and deplore? If a man should build a locomotive that could not take a train of cars faster than five miles an hour, with a suitable number of men to

manage it, when the same men, with another locomotive, without working as hard as they did on the first, could make it draw a like train thirty or forty miles an hour, would he not think, with much propriety, there was a defect in its construction? Would he foolishly charge the men with laziness and want of skill after he had seen their success in working the last engine, even when he could not, by any means, increase the speed of his? Most certainly he would not; but with untiring zeal, he would reconstruct his, and endeavor to improve upon the principles of the last locomotive, so that, if possible, he might make one to excel it. So should we not charge those foolishly who are laboring faithfully to carry out a system of education which we have put into their hands, if it does not work the results we could wish. All the systems of education to teach the young to read are *indirect.* It is not because we have had no *direct method* in our schools to teach the young to read that we have succeeded no better. Do not children spend years in our schools to learn *indirectly* what might be taught them in a *direct* manner in much less than half the time? From more than thirty years' experience in and observation on the

indirect system of teaching, and from an experience of more than twenty years during that time in a direct system, I am fully prepared to answer in the affirmative. Let is now go to school with the young beginner, and follow him through all his course of toil and suffering in learning to read, and see if we can find what hinders him in his course, what it is that so discourages him, and so nearly breaks his heart.

Do you shudder at the proposition? Are you afraid, even in imagination, to enter the old prison-house from which you have long since escaped? Is it the sweltering summers, or the frosty winters that you are terrified at, or is it the hard benches on which you sat so many years, that so disturbs your mind? No, no! this is scarcely a grain in the balance. You were thinking of something harder than all these; you were thinking of the task of holding a book in your hands, and vainly attempting to study it till it became rotten, and fell to pieces. You were thinking how you had requirements laid upon you by parents and teachers, which it was impossible for you to perform. How you were compelled to act the hypocrite and knave; how you felt your heart crushed because you could not perform

what was required of you; how you hated your school because you could not advance yourself to meet the expectations of your friends. But, for the present, dismiss your recollections of the past, and let us enter the school-room, and see if all who go to school have the same cause of complaint.

The first thing taught in our schools is the alphabet. This is usually done in a *direct* manner; where it is so taught, children learn it rapidly; a few of the easiest spelling lessons are generally taught in the same way, and the young scholar succeeds well so far. We then give him a spelling or a reading book, and assign him lessons therein, requiring him to study the same; but this he cannot do. He at once feels himself abandoned and betrayed. It is here we discourage and crush the young mind. It is here our school system is so woefully deficient. It is here the pupil is left with no strength of his own to aid him onward. It is here he is left to grope his way in darkness, learning only by indirect dictation and absurd fooleries, while he can see nothing that is beautiful or lovely to cheer him onward. It is here his mind becomes soured and disordered for want of proper aid to help it to rise and expand itself in useful knowledge. We will sup-

pose him to have an easy spelling lesson assigned him; he is called up to spell—very few teachers now hear the lesson read—the book is closed, and the pupil is taught to spell words which he cannot read or pronounce in a spelling book. Do we not know that we can teach children to spell who do not know their letters? Do we not know that it is perfectly *useless* to teach scholars to spell if they do not know their letters, or cannot read the words which they spell? Do we not know that it would be just as consistent, while teaching them the letters, to give them a lesson in the alphabet to study, and then have them close their books and repeat it in the order in which it is written, correcting them when they miscall it, as to teach them to spell words which they cannot read. They would, of course, be able in a short time to call all the names of the letters correctly, but it would be of no practical use to them whatever. Neither is the practice of spelling words that the scholar cannot read of any practical use. Formerly, scholars had some help from their teacher to teach them to read their spelling lessons; but there never has been any system in our schools, or any thorough practice or method to aid children to learn to read words as a whole, and in their

elementary parts. This should, however, be made the most prominent branch of primary instruction in all our common schools. Instead of reading the spelling lesson to the teacher, scholars now are required to pronounce the word after the teacher—words which they never have read or pronounced in a book, and words which they would not know nor could not possibly make out from any skill or knowledge of their own, if they should see them in any book whatever, and then spell it, or guess at spelling it. The practice may look a little more absurd if we should write out a short example of it. But first let me observe, that scholars cannot read short words correctly any better than they can long words, until they have been shown how they can never read any word right and know it to be so, unless they have heard some one read it that did know how often enough to enable them to remember it, or had a teacher that helped them to read it till they learned how and what to call it. Few, even after they have gone through our schools, know enough about the principles of pronunciation contained in our books, to enable them to pronounce a word correctly, from the principles there laid down. They, of course, are never able to

speak a word unless they have heard some other one speak it first. Consequently, a scholar has *to be taught* how to read each and every word by *imitation*, or from a knowledge of the vowel and consonant sounds, which he cannot learn at first sufficiently to use them without the aid of his teacher. Then, as we at first learn to read words by *imitation*, consequently we can learn nothing of them at first by our own effort to study them, and scholars should never be required or allowed to make a sham-show of studying, and never have a lesson assigned them to study till they have been exercised sufficiently in *reading* words to enable them to do so understandingly. But to the time-honored practice of learning to spell. We will suppose the class to have an easy lesson assigned them to study six words, viz:

cat	**dog**
gun	**hog**
rat	**pig**

which they know they will be called on to spell, and which, if it was in their power they would study, for children naturally like to do something. But as this class of beginners

know nothing about reading the words contained in their lesson, never having heard them read, and not knowing anything about the vowel and consonant sounds of the letters composing the words, whether the vowels are long or short, broad or flat, etc., etc, and after they have looked at them for an hour or two, making a great display of study, by looking as grave as possible, moving their lips like a lot of young apes, and mumbling over a thousand unknown things. They are called up to spell; standing with books closed, and arms folded up ready to echo the word and spell when it is their turn. The teacher pronounces the first word of the lesson, which is *CAT*, the scholar at the head of the class pronouncing the word after him, saying *CAT;* then spelling, says Catt; next, Kat; next, Cait; *how* Cait? next, Katt; next, Cate; next, Kate; next, Katte; next, Catte; next, Caitte; next, Kaitte; next, Caat; next, Caate; next, Kaat; next, Kaate; next, C——A——(hesitates) when the teacher asks him what his mother drank at breakfast. The boy taking courage, and looking very wise, exclaims, T. That is is right, John, now you may go up to the head. The teacher puts out the next word, which is Gun, the scholar pronouncing

it after him, saying gun, but not seeing his way clear, looks imploringly at the teacher, who, wanting to make it as clear a case as possible for his pupil, repeats it over several times very distinctly, and with long quantity, saying G–u–n, G—u—n, G——u——n. At length, the boy, knowing he must make a guess at it, right or wrong, spells, saying, G——u——n. That is right; now pronounce it, my good fellow. But the boy, in the excitement of the moment, does not know how to pronounce it, when the teacher repeats the letters G–u–n, and asks the boy, half reproachfully, if he cannot tell what g–u–n spells; the boy not being able, and the teacher wishing to have his class master one word of the lesson if possible, and thinking he would have better success with this scholar than any of the rest, asks him if he knows what his father takes when he goes to kill a hawk; the boy not being used to hunting associations, but having frequently seen his father butcher hogs, concluded, on the whole, that the teacher said hog instead of hawk, when the light flashed upon his mind, and being animated with the idea of being now able to finish his word so as to suit the requirements of the teacher exactly, he triumph-

antly exclaims, "Oh yes, a butcher *knife*." Now follows a tremendous roar of laughter, which startles the entire neighborhood in which the school-house is located, and the little boy, poor fellow! is nearly annihilated; but tears coming to his relief, helps reason to maintain her empire, and the teacher finally being able to silence the uproar, and speaking a word of encouragement to the afflicted scholar, tells the class they must take that lesson over again.

In this horrible manner a large portion of the scholar's time is consumed in school, paralyzing his mind more than imparting useful instruction, and wasting and blunting the energies of the thousands who are sent there for instruction. Yet all the exercises had in our schools to teach scholars to spell are on this principle. Some teachers give out a certain number of words each day, requiring their pupils to write them, after which their bad spelling is corrected. In order to learn to spell in this manner, scholars must first learn to read and write, and be able to refer to their dictionaries before they learn to spell, which, at the slow rate that scholars learn to read and write in our schools, could not be till they would become quite grown up to manhood; and as a

teacher of this order never gives out more than ten or fifteen words for a lesson, and having but one lesson a day, according to custom, a scholar would not have more than six or nine hundred words to learn in a quarter, and allowing they went to school steady time the year round, they would have to go to school from five and a half to seven and a half years to learn to spell some twenty thousand words, which, in all probability, would bring them to the age of eighteen or twenty-one years, before they would be through a course of learning to spell, on this principle. But the fact is, that scholars never have exercises enough in this method to teach them to spell so as to do them much good, and the lessons they do take in this way are generally passed by without much attention, as scholars at this age have their minds drawn out after other studies, and have generally given up the idea of ever becoming good spellers, the season for studying this branch of learning having nearly passed away, and a multitude of new ideas, hopes, and aspirations now more fully occupy their minds. The idea of teaching scholars generally to be good spellers, is now entirely despaired of. The opinion formerly had on this subject was, that when our

schools should be better sustained by the public treasury, and teachers become more learned, we should arrive at a degree in this respect that would be tolerable. But having had these accessions for many years, and corresponding efforts having been made, we find the public mind is now without hope, and, like the passengers and crew on an ill-fated steamer, we are each trying to save himself, while nearly all are going to swift destruction. When once total despair seizes upon the mind, it is most frequently indicated by silence, so we have heard nothing, *nothing*, NOTHING on this subject by way of encouragement for half a century. It is true, we frequently hear reproaches cast upon the young for any deficiency shown in this respect, and frequently hear of persons losing good opportunities in consequence of it, and have even known some fail of obtaining the object of their greatest affections for the same reason. But, after all, we hear of no remedy; none but the old cry of laziness and inattention, to encourage us, and bid us hope. And till now, for a long time, we have not heard so much as that from any public print. The following is from the *Observer and Democrat*, Utica, Nov. 13, 1854:

"*Learning to Spell.*—Bad spelling is dis-

creditable. Every young man should be a master of his native tongue. He that will not learn to spell the language that is on his tongue and before his eyes every hour, shows no great aptitude for the duties of an intelligent, observing man. Bad spelling is therefore a discreditable indication; it indicates a blundering man—a man that cannot see with his eyes open. Accordingly, we have known the application of more than one young man made with great display of penmanship and parade of references rejected for his bad spelling. Bad spelling is a very bad indication. He who runs may read it. A bright schoolboy, utterly incapable of appreciating your stores of science, arts and literature, can see your blunders. You will find it hard to inspire that boy with any great respect for your attainments. Bad spelling is therefore a mortifying and inconvenient defect. We have known men thrown into very prominent positions so ashamed of their deficiency in this respect, that they never ventured to send a letter until it had been revised by a friend. This was, to say the least of it, sufficiently inconvenient. We say again, learn to spell. Keep your eyes open when you read, and if any word is spelt differently from

your mode, ascertain what is right. Keep your dictionary before you, and in writing, whenever you have the least misgiving about the spelling of a word, look at it at once, and remember it. Do not let your laziness get the better of you."

Very good advice, to be sure; but there is no remedy but to have your eyes wide open, and dictionary before you, after you have entered upon the active duties of life, which goes to show that we do not learn to spell at school. Again, from Hints on Education, contained in Mr. Roswell C. Smith's introduction to his quarto Geography, we have the following. He says:

"Some instances of a superficial education may be noticed here in illustration of the preceding remarks. A superficial course is often pursued in respect to reading. To read with force and spirit, with ease and elegance, a person must understand what he reads; he must have not only a general conception of the subject, but a knowledge of each particular word, otherwise it will be very much with him as it was with Milton's daughters, who were accustomed to read Greek to their father when he was blind, without knowing the meaning of a single word they uttered. A

young lady of extensive but careless reading, remarked that she did like to hear a certain young clergyman pronounce the word 'ingenious' as 'ingen-uous,' it sounded so much better."

In the examination of nine teachers, all of whom proved bad readers, though well qualified in other respects, the cause was traced directly to their ignorance of the use of words. A person may be taught, it is true, to pause at the stops and marks, and may read thus in a measured pace, very much like a person marching, or rather like the players in Hamlet, who sawed the air most unmercifully. If further illustration were needed, the late reports in reference to certain schools in New England, doubtless as good as any in the land, would furnish it. Among other things, the most lamentable deficiency was observed in defining words, taken at random from the books they were in the daily habit of perusing. The grosser blunders in reading obviously consist in an improper knowledge of orthography, that is, either in miscalling the words according to their elementary sounds, or in mispronouncing them according to the common standard. This branch of education, which may be considered

the door or key of science, and therefore paramount to all others, has come of late into great neglect. Spelling is learned much as we learn our vernacular tongue, by observation and dint of memory. Teachers now-a-days, pass over this exercise in a hurried manner. It is carefully excluded from almost every "programme" at public examinations as in bad taste. Formerly it was thought to be a great accomplishment, as it really is, to be able to spell every word in the spelling-book, and many a pupil could, with truth, boast of it. Teachers then required all, both old and young, at stated intervals, to study their spelling lessons, and thorough work was made of it. Indeed, it was made the most prominent pursuit, but now it is cast into distance and shade. Such an interest was excited that teachers, pupils, parents, and friends would assemble in the evening at the school-house, for spelling exercises. But the old fashioned spelling schools, ever objects of great interest to all concerned, have long since become obsolete, and their places are often supplied by the grandiloquent lectures of some ignorant pretender to science, setting forth his ability to teach grammar perhaps in "twelve lessons," arithmetic in "twenty," and geography in about the same number,

"without either book or map." This undoubtedly shows the state of things in a pretty clear light, and virtually admits that the spelling-book is laid aside in many of our schools, although spelling-books of some kind are generally retained and seem to be kept more for show than for any practical purpose, and hence people seldom learn to spell till they go into business or become authors. I was told by a teacher who had been three years in one of our public shools, that they had not, during that time, taken a class through the spelling-book. A lady in the same city told me that two little girls of hers, of suitable age to spell, had been to another public school several months, and had not had but two spelling exercises during that time. Thus we see the schools afford no aid to enable the young scholar to read words that he might be able to spell and pronounce them correctly, nor any exercise to teach scholars to spell but that of guessing. And as we have not shown the absurdity of this guessing system fully, I will quote from Zachos' New American Speaker, page 16, to show the infinite extent to which it might be carried. He is sufficiently extensive on the subject; but I think some old guessers might exceed it. In speaking of the element-

ary sounds of the English language, he says:

"Indeed the greatness of the difficulty that attends this subject can only be appreciated by those who have directed to it a special attention. The *painful toil* and *trouble* of our childhood is forgotten in the facility which long drilling and constant repetition have given to our maturer years. *Yet the first three or four years* of instruction are chiefly spent in teaching children the proper significance and use of those signs of sound. When we consider that all this labor is owing to irregularities that can be swept away in one blow by the adoption of one simple law, viz., that of having a single sign for each elementary sound, it seems a wonder that intelligent beings should submit to such a monstrous perversion of human labor. It is a subject I cannot here enter upon; but the reformation proposed in this respect demands the earnest attention and practical coöperation of every one interested in the cause of education. What shall we make of a system of representative signs, in view of anything rational or convenient, which leaves one a choice of eleven thousand six hundred and twenty-eight different ways of spelling the same word?

"To make my assertion good, I will take the word *Constantinople*. There are thirteen simple sounds in it, not counting the final e, which is silent. A glance at the following analysis, with respect to the signs of sounds, will show that the analogy of common usage will justify one in representing several of these sounds by more than one sign, making in all nineteen different signs for thirteen sounds. These nineteen signs, according to the Algebraic Theory of Combinations, can be used to spell the word in eleven thousand six hundred and twenty-eight different ways. And this not throwing in any silent letters, in which words abound, *and which might swell the present calculation to over a million.* As a curiosity, one of these combinations is given—*Kancdendonaple*—justified by the analogy of the sound k in kick, a in all, c in city, d in stopped, e in there, o in woman, a in was. Not only is there scarcely a letter in the language that represents one invariable sound, but most of them stand for so many different sounds as to place upon the present twenty-six letters the labor of representing one hundred sounds! besides, twelve of these are often silent, and have no significance in combination. Such is this imbroglio and sense-confounding

system of representative signs! Nothing but a dry routine, a constant drilling and stultifying repetition can ever make a tolerable speller."

I think this calculation is enough to make the cold sweat stand on a teacher's brow. The idea of guessing a million of times to get a word right, and the teacher consequently saying the word *NEXT*, a million of times has something in it that should cause the teacher to consider well the evils of the system. No wonder, then, that the cry is heard from Maine to California, that we have become a nation of poor spellers, and consequently poor readers, if we may guess a million of times to get one word right. No wonder that many wish to reconstruct the language in order to obviate this evil. No wonder that boys play truant so much, and hate studying in general, when they were so sadly balked in the first study they undertook. Had they been properly introduced to it, the large and almost boundlesss energies naturally in children would have enabled them to have triumphed speedily; and feeling themselves conquerors in this, they would have possessed an invincible courage that would have carried them through all other studies triumphantly. But unfortunately we have ever taken a

wrong course to teach the young to read. We have required them to spell words before we taught them to read those words understandingly, causing them to guess almost to infinity how to spell words which in most instances they could not read in a book, or know enough about to distinguish them from others in the lesson.

And now the question arises: how do teachers teach scholars to read if they do not (as we have seen) teach them to read and spell words in a spelling-book, till they have become sufficiently acquainted with them to pronounce them at sight? If you should go into the schools of our State, you would see thousands of the juveniles who are there learning to read, some engaged with the green pictorial primer, some with the first reader, and others with the second reader, etc. The pupils, at first learning their letters, and then reading a very few simple spelling and reading lessons alternately, the spelling lessons being destitute of any proper classification, and containing so few words in the aggregate, that they would be of very little help to them were they ever so correctly taught. But the fact is, teachers give very little or no attention to the spelling lessons

contained in those readers; but spend their time principally in dictating reading lessons to their pupils. So that the story of the Fly and the Spider, the Cruel Boy and the Robins, the Boy and the Butterfly, etc., are read in the hearing of the school, till they have all nearly learned them by heart; and when they read those stories to their parents and friends, they depend more upon their memories in reading or rehearsing them, than upon any knowledge of the words which compose the sentences. And should their parents require them to read in a book containing lessons equally as easy, but which they had not previously learned, they would be quite unable to do so, which plainly shows that in order to make children good readers, they should first be taught WORDS. But the universal practice is, that when they have committed one book to MEMORY, or nearly so, they then take another, and so on, till each scholar has a library of reading books of his own. But should they continue on this principle to read all the series of reading books to infinity, they would still be poor spellers and stammering readers.

Many seem to see this evil, but know not how to remedy it. I was telling an intelligent farmer not long since, my method of

teaching children to read; I mentioned a class I had taught to read in three months, so that they could read in any easy reader, one as well as another. He said his little girl learned to read some lessons in Sanders' first reader in four months, but she could not read any in other books. Another farmer who was standing by, hearing the conversation, said, that was just the case with his girl whom he had sent to school three years; she could read in no book but her little reader, and his little Johnny had heard her repeat the lessons so much that he could say them almost as well as she could, and he had never been to school, and did not know his letters. Thus it is that parents are betrayed, and their efforts to educate their children rendered almost useless, through the *indirect* and inefficient *course* taken in our schools to instruct them. And after spending several years sending our children to school, and buying a multitude of reading-books for them, and enduring a thousand anxieties as to their success, they are turned upon our hands a lot of stammering, unaccomplished readers, and poor spellers. Discouraged, disheartened, and their prospects for becoming thorough scholars nearly gone, unless we have a large amount of

money to bestow upon their education, and can afford to send them to school several years longer. We have now had more than twenty years' practice with a series of reading-books in our schools. The *manner* in which we have generally, and still are using them, is productive of immense injury to the cause of education. It was never the intention of the first writer of a series of reading books, that they should supersede the spelling-book. This is evident when we read the preface and notes in Mr. Cobb's spelling-book which I take very great pleasure in placing before the reader, not only to establish the above fact, but also as the very highest evidence as to what should be learned before proceeding to reading lessons. And I would here beg the reader to note with care, that Mr. Cobb did not make those declarations to be heard of men; but with untiring patience wrote out with unsurpassed skill, and almost superhuman invention, a spelling-book which contains more than thirteen thousand words, so perfectly classified in all its features as to render it the most useful book that was ever written for our schools to aid the learner in this important elementary study.

Let us hear Mr. Cobb—Cobb's New Speller,

page 16—he says: "Orthography or Spelling being the *first* step towards the attainment of a good education, and particularly to a correct knowledge of the English language, it is highly important that every scholar should attain this before he is permitted to proceed to any higher branches of study. This branch of education is obviously much neglected in nearly all our schools. Teachers, whether they know orthography and pronunciation well or not, are apt to think these of little or no importance, and permit their scholars to pass to other lessons too soon. But this is very injudicious; a building cannot be elegant and permanent unless erected on a good foundation, and a thorough knowledge of spelling and pronunciation can be obtained only by a repetition of the letters until the *association* of those letters and their *sounds* are deeply impressed upon the mind of the scholar."

This is unchangeable truth, and the memory of Lyman Cobb should ever be dear to every parent's and teacher's heart for having written it. And those who have been carried away from it by false issues or theories, should, by every consideration, speedily return to it as the chief corner stone of all our success in education. On the same page let us hear Mr.

Cobb still further, where he cautions teachers against the impropriety of introducing scholars to their reading lessons before they know the orthography and pronunciation of *words*. Those who are intrusted with the education of youth should have it deeply engraven on their memories. He says:

"The practice of teaching a child to read or pronounce a *reading* lesson before he knows the orthography and pronunciation of words, retards rather than facilitates his progress in *correct* reading. No child should be required to attempt to read or pronounce a *reading* lesson until he is able to call or pronounce at sight the words commonly met with in composition, and this knowledge can be more easily acquired by reading or pronouncing words in the spelling columns of a spelling-book, judiciously and analogically classed, than in detached reading lessons. If the scholar be required to read or pronounce words in a *reading* lesson before he has learned to sound or pronounce them *separately* in spelling columns at sight, he will hesitate, and will most generally be confirmed in the habit of stammering while reading; for although a child may know perfectly well how to *spell* a word, and to divide it as it

is in a spelling column, yet, when he sees the *same* word in a *reading* lesson, the syllables being closed up, it presents a new appearence to him. It should always be borne in mind that *reading* is the enunciation or pronouncing of words by *syllables*, and that, therefore, each syllable in every word should be as distinctly enunciated or pronounced as if the whole reading lesson were composed of mony-syllables *only*. Hence the importance of pronouncing words at sight in spelling columns. Unless children do acquire a correct and distinct enunciation of each syllable in spelling columns, they rarely or never acquire it in after life; for in the practice or business of reading, the pauses, emphasis, cadence, etc., occupy all, or nearly all their attention."

Thus one of the greatest educators of his time faithfully sounded the note of alarm, and did not fail to place it conspicuously in every reading-book which he prepared for the instruction of the young learner. But unfortunately the friendly warning was unheeded, the country took a wrong course in regard to the well-intended use of a series of school readers, and instead of using them as helps, do now, to a great extent, use them as a medium of teaching the English language.

The system of instruction set forth in the following pages does not differ from that of Mr. Cobb, as to what should *first* be learned, but its main feature consists in a direct method of teaching hitherto unknown, that enables the learner, from the outset, to rapidly acquire a knowledge of the English language. It enables the teacher to coöperate with the scholar in enabling him to learn the words and elements in a *direct manner*, so that the teacher can give constant and direct aid to the learner in all his efforts to learn the language. All other systems leave the learner nearly in a helpless condition, inasmuch as he cannot help himself, and renders the teacher of very little help to him. This system is just the *American idea*, inasmuch as it enables the scholar to learn as fast again and as well again, and qualifies the teacher to do more than twice the work that he can perform under the old system. If this system was introduced into all our schools it would do more to *Americanize* the thousands who come from the old world than all others combined; it would enable us more than any one thing else to maintain our *American* character, as hundreds of thousands would go into our schools and learn to *read* our language, and

thus become like one of *us*. On this method an industrious teacher could take one hundred young men without any one to help him, and teach them to read in four or six months. There is not the least difficulty in teaching children to read sufficiently to join a class in Sunday-school in three or four months. Thus in a few weeks, not only teaching children to read, but introducing them much earlier than usual to a school acknowledged by all to be a great blessing to the community. This system will teach children to be good spellers and readers so young that they will have much more time for other studies at school than they now have, and their minds will be more vigorous than those trained up under the old systen.

Believing that a short account of the rise and progress of the Direct System will be interesting, and serve to place it in a more practical light before the public, I here give a short sketch of it, showing, that if the theory is good, the practice is equally so, which is not the case with many theories presented for public consideration.

THE DISCOVERY AND SUBSEQUENT PROGRESS

OF THE

AUTHOR'S SYSTEM OF DIRECT TEACHING.

In the month of August, 1831, I went into a large school, where I found five quite interesting boys, that were from eight to eleven years of age, who had been to school from two to three years, without learning their letters. I used all the skill I was master of for some considerable time, to teach them the letters, but to my astonishment I found all my efforts perfectly unavailing. I had formerly had the reputation of succeeding tolerably well with scholars of this description, and to be balked on a lot of boys of sound mind, as they were, seemed more than I was willing to submit to; it lay with considerable weight on my mind. One evening, after retiring to rest, the subject of teaching those boys to read came up before me; I had already tried every art I was master of to no purpose whatever—indeed, I could not safely say that I had taught them one let-

ter. At last I thought upon a plan I would enter upon the next day, and see what effect it might have upon this class of hopefuls. In the morning, I procured a new elementary spelling-book for each of them. When the school was called to order, and we were ready to begin the school exercises, I called out this class of boys, had them stand in line like other classes, gave each of them a spelling-book. I told them I was going to put out words to them in the spelling-book; that I wanted them to be sure and keep their places, and do their best to call their letters, and pronounce the word after they had read it; that I would tell them when they failed to call the letters right; that I wanted each scholar to look at the words while being read. I told them I thought they would soon learn their letters in this way, if they would be good boys to look on, and mind their places. I then began with the syllable lessons, and read through the first lesson on this principle. I gave them a new lesson every time they read, and I was soon very greatly encouraged. I knew they were learning very fast, and they knew it as well as I did. They read right forward, never taking a lesson over. They soon got so expert in reading in this way, that they

could dispatch a page of spelling to a lesson —they had now learned their letters perfectly. They read through the book, taking a new lesson every time they read. I now found I should have to adopt this plan in all my school, which I did, as this A B C know-nothing class had got so that they could read better than a small class I had been hearing read in the old way, and were considered at the commencement of the school as being fair readers. At the end of six months this abecedarian class became the medium spellers in school. One of them was considered the third choice in our spelling-schools. They could read very well in the old English Reader. This, to me, was the end of teaching school on the old plan. I thought at the time that there was a *principle* in this that was worth the attention of the world.

The next school I went into was what is called in our town, the North School; here I taught on the new plan with like success. During the process of this school I had a scholar sent me from a distance, who was represented to have been to school considerably, but his teachers could not get him beyond a knowledge of the letters. He was a son of one of the ablest school-teachers of the country, and his father had made every effort

known to teach him to read; he was during that winter teaching school in his own district —the school-house being located within a few rods of his own dwelling, so that nothing but stern necessity made him send his son to a strange school. I knew nothing of his case till I read his letter of introduction. They verily thought him a hard fellow. I commenced with him on my plan, and in three weeks he had gone through the ab's, and the following lessons, and had got to reading in the Bot-a-ny table on the forty-first page in the Elementary Spelling-book. When his father came to see how he was getting along, he appeared very much surprised and delighted; wished to know how I had done it. When I told him, he said he should take him home, for he could now teach him as well as I could, which he did, for he early became a good scholar and an able teacher.

Thus I continued with like success till the winter of 1851, never failing in a single instance, where I had a scholar under my instruction as long as three or four months, to teach him to be quite a good speller and reader in easy reading books. During this winter (1851) I called the special attention of the town superintendent to a class of four little scholars, which had

come into my school. I told him I should make them readers in easy reading-books in three months, which I did; and on the last day of the quarter, they each read a lesson before the school and spectators who attended, with as much confidence and propriety as could be wished; and it should be borne in mind that I did not let them see those lessons till the day before they read them before the school, and that they had not heard them read in school, and that they read them from a knowledge of the words. One of them read a piece entitled The Lord's Prayer Versified, in Sanders' Second Reader, page 175. One read a piece in the same book, on the 180th page, called My Bible. The others read a piece in Cobb's Reader, No 2, page 142, entitled My Mother, containing fourteen verses, one reading the first seven verses, and the other the remainder. The manner of their reading greatly surprised those who came in to see the school, as they read without repetitions or stammering, minding the pauses in a proper manner, and keeping their places with their eye. I made diligent inquiry as to the success of other scholars of like age, who were beginners, and I found none that had gone further than to learn their letters, and be able to read the *ab's*.

while this class had read the spelling-book through once, and the second time to the 80th page (Elementary Spelling-book), and had read all the words in Sanders' Pictorial Primer, as spelling lessons, and had read Cobb's Reader, No. 2, as reading lessons, nearly through.

In the winter of 1852, I was in a school of large scholars, where I had no opportunity with small scholars whatever. But in the winter term, 1853, of that same school, which term began on the thirteenth of September, and continued till the first of April, the year following, I was requested to take four small scholars—one little girl, seven years old; one six; one little boy, in delicate health, six years old, and one boy seven or eight years old. The last had been to school, as near as I could learn, more than two years. He knew but two of his letters, A and O, and W sometimes. This last boy did not come very steady on account of sickness: he learned his letters, however, during the winter, and could read most of the words in Cobb's New Spelling-book, when he had the words pronounced for him, and was occasionally aided to pronounce the syllables. I have since heard that he has learned to read. I saw him in Sabbath-

school not long since, reciting his lesson with great seeming satisfaction to his teacher. And here, allow me to say, I think it is very likely that little boy would never have recited a lesson in a Sabbath-school, if it had not been for the discovery of the direct method of teaching the young to read.

The two little girls, and the other little boy mentioned, knew their letters pretty generally, but could read no more than a few of the syllable lessons, and those but imperfectly. I gave them lessons in the United States Spelling-book, because I thought they would be able to keep their places better. The little boy that was hard to learn, read with them, and also with the whole school, twice a day, as I shall hereafter describe. When they had read about sixty pages in this spelling-book, they could read the words with such dispatch, that I told them I could let them read with the whole school twice a day, if they would get Cobb's New Spelling-book, which they immediately procured, after which they had six lessons or exercises in a day, in the two spelling-books; you will see how this was done when you come to read the remarks on classing schools. I utterly refused to let them attempt to study, keeping their books on my

table, except when they had their reading exercise; but I soon found that they were reading at home, and their parents sent me word that if I wished they would get their little scholars a reading-book. I returned answer that I thought they did not yet need one. Some time after this I met the father of the little boy first named, when he saluted me by saying, "Why don't you get my little boy a reader, he can read almost as well as I can, he is reading the Testament and newspaper, and every book he can get hold of, and I think you should get him a reading-book." I told him that in order to teach a child to read, we had to teach them to read words first, that all the time I could devote to teaching his boy, I thought it better employed in teaching him to read *words* than to spend it in a reading-book. He did not, however, seem to understand the subject; thought his boy a smart little fellow to learn; considered none could go before him if he had a good chance, and here, I must say, the greatest secret of this little boy's success was in his giving such close attention to the exercise; he would not let a word pass unless he saw it; he was the most attentive scholar I think I ever had, and I never knew one, under all circumstances, that succeeded better; he

was so bashful at first that it was difficult to get him to read, and the only way I could do so was, to have his brother stand in the class with him, and take the same exercises he did. At the end of three or four weeks he had gained sufficient confidence to read alone. Two weeks before the school closed, which was on the first day of April, I got readers for the smallest girl and the little boy—it was Town's Reader, No. 2. There was a young lady in my school, who had taught school considerably; I asked her to come forward and hear the little scholars read their first lesson, which she did; the books were entirely new to them. I gave them the lesson, and they read it, keeping their places with their eye, and no one had to show them in the least where the place was, as is usual with beginners in the old system. She expressed herself as being much delighted, said she had never seen beginners read in that way before; could not see how it could be possible, but the great secret was, they knew how to read the words, and so they could pronounce them in sentences.

The other little girl was a little older, and her mind, consequently, more matured; she had got along faster than the rest. I had,

some weeks before, let her go into a reading-class in Town's Reader, No. 3. She made good work of it, and frequently read selections from Sweet's Elocution, to the great delight of spectators who visited our school. She attended school very steadily after she commenced going, and went more days than the others. The little boy went ninety-two days, and the smallest girl attended less than ninety days. At the end of the term they went to the Sabbath-school, where they have since regularly attended.

During the summer following I kept school in the same place, and had both small and large scholars, when I had abundant opportunity to see the triumph of the *direct system.* I had scholars fresh from schools that knew nothing about it, who had nearly committed to memory Readers No. 1 and 2, and came with No. 3 in hand, thinking I was going to teach them that in the same manner. I did no such thing; I did not hear them read a *reading* lesson till several weeks had passed. All the time that reasonably belonged to them in school, I employed with them in spelling-book exercises, in reading, pronouncing, spelling and keying words, till they learned that words were composed of letters and syllables,

that every word contained a vowel, that gave character to the pronunciation of that word; that words of two or more syllables had an accented syllable which contained a vowel, that gave character to the word in general; that the different vowel sounds were indicated by figures placed over them in the spelling columns, and also over standard words, which would clearly indicate to them the character of the vowel sound over which it was placed; and after teaching them the use and application of the above, and how to read the vowel sounds in words, without speaking the name of the letter, I commenced hearing them in their reading lessons. They were now more than half their own schoolmasters. Instead of guessing at a word as a whole, they now had the secret of finding the proper pronunciation of the same from a knowledge of the elements, and being able to call words correctly in sentences, they were now able to learn the meaning of words by their connection with other words in the same sentence. This school became so interested in their spelling and reading-books, that it was more a pleasure than a task to instruct them.

During this summer, at the request of my friends in Remsen and Trenton, I visited seve-

ral of their schools, and gave them a lecture on the direct system of instruction. It was perfectly overwhelming wherever I went, and no doubt seemed to exist as to its propriety and advantage over every other system known. I visited seven schools in this way and found the teachers and trustees invariably anxious to introduce it into their schools, but felt themselves in want of a *manual* containing suitable instructions on the subject, to enable them to do so successfully. I see but two obstacles in the way of introducing the direct system into all our schools at once: the first is in the teachers themselves; they need to be better orthoëpists. This, where they have a will, can soon be accomplished. The other is a want of suitable spelling-books. The most of our spelling-books in use are too small, that is, contain too few words; there is no spelling-book now in use that contains the number of words that I could wish to meet the wants of this system. I think we should have a spelling-book containing twenty thousand words. In such a book we would have a large pronouncing vocabulary of modern geographical names, retaining all that we now have in our best spelling-books, besides somewhat enlarging its spelling lessons. But the smallness of our

spelling-books is not the only objection to them. Their classification is such, or having no classfication at all, that it renders them unfit for our use in the direct method of instruction. Is it not a matter of the most profound astonishment, that we have so many spelling-books forced upon our schools, containing no classification whatever—not a single mark whatever contained in the whole book to indicate the vowel sound of a single word contained in them? Books of this description are more generally in our schools than any other, and teachers emanating from schools of the highest order seem more inclined to introduce such books than any other, and not many years ago, our State Convention of County Superintendents recommended one of the leading books of this tribe, as the most suitable spelling-book of any for the use of common schools in our State. Are we thus to be driven back to a state of barbarism by the same men who, of all others, should save us from it? Are we no longer to have any means of knowing how to pronounce our words correctly but that of asking our school-teacher, who knows nothing of the subject except what his nurse has told him? What will all the big dictionaries and normal charts in our school districts

avail us, if we are to be taught in this manner?

At the close of my school, it was visited by the Rev. Andrew Peck and Rev. Richard Redhead. We spent the afternoon showing them the exercises had in the direct method of learning to read, after which the Rev. Andrew Peck addressed the school. He commenced by saying that he acknowledged himself an entire convert to the system; that he believed it to be the greatest discovery of the age; that he thought if it were introduced into our schools, it would do more for them than all the improvements had therein for a century past. This, together with similar testimony, led me to believe that it would yet be appreciated by the public, whenever it should be suitably brought before them.

During the fall of 1853 I visited my brother, who resides in the town of Turin, Lewis County. He had some knowledge of the direct system, having visited my schools, and conversed considerably with me on this subject, but had not till this time felt any very great personal interest in it. On arriving at his house, he said, "Well, John, I have thought a great deal lately about your way of teaching school." "Ah!" said I, "how is

that, brother?" "Why," said he, "we have sent our little Mary to school this summer, and she has not lost but one day in six months, and she knew all the letters perfectly before she went, and she has learned scarcely anything all summer. She can't read words of two syllables, and she has held her book in her hands trying to study it till the lower part is all gone." "The old story," said I, truly. "Now, brother, do you go to the school-house and tell your teacher that I will give a lecture on the new method of teaching the young to read." It was arranged to be at the school-house the next day at nine o'clock. There was a good attendance of trustees and inhabitants, three school teachers among the rest, and after hearing the lecture, they were so well pleased with the system that they were determined to adopt it as far as they were able. They hired one of the teachers that heard the lecture to teach their winter school, who taught it on the *direct system* as near as she was able, and at the end of the term, which was four months, I received a letter from my brother, stating that they had succeeded admirably; that little Mary had learned to read so that she could read in the Testament, and could spell very well in the

spelling-book generally, which was Cobb's New Spelling-book.

In the winter of 1854 I kept in my own district. At the commencement of the term, the superintendent called on me, and wished me to show him my method of teaching. Accordingly, I showed him the exercises in full, both in spelling and reading. At the close, he addressed the school at considerable length, expressed himself highly delighted with the new method, said he should recommend it in the schools throughout the town. In this school I have a class of small scholars, my little daughter, six years old, among the rest. I had refused to let her go to school the summer before, because we had a teacher that taught in the old way. The school was free from any charges, and we had a good teacher of the old stamp, the daughter of one of my most respected and intimate friends, to whom I made an apology for not sending my little girl to school to his daughter. I could not endure the thought of sacrificing her young mind to such a system. She attended my school forty-two days, during the term being detained at home on account of sickness. She knew nearly all the letters when she commenced going, but in that short space of time

she learned to read most of the words in Cobb's New Spelling-book, was able to key most of them on the book, could read easy reading-books generally, several of which she read through after the school had closed, among the rest a Sunday-school book entitled "A Day in Mary Carrow's School." The summer term following, this little girl went to school ninety-eight days, to a young girl, fifteen years of age, who taught in our district on the direct system, after which I took her to the Teachers' Institute, held in Utica, where she read before the Institute from books she had never before seen, without miscalling a word, and in articulation there was not her equal in the Institute.

During the summer of 1854 I kept a select school. There was a little girl whom I should judge to be six or seven years old, who attended this school. She had been sent to school several months before, and did not make much progress. She knew nearly all the letters; but her parents began to think she would be very hard to learn, and so they sent her to me. After she had been in my school three or four days, her mother called to see how she was getting along. She had heard I could teach children to read very fast,

and she thought the way I necessarily did it was to give them large lessons to study, and in case they did not get them well, to punish them severely. She verily thought I had no other way to get along with scholars but this, and she had been thinking how her little girl was going to fare, and was very uneasy about it, and well she might be. She thought her little girl would be hard to learn, and would require considerable time to learn to read. I told her I thought her little girl would learn to read without much difficulty; that I should not want her to study any at all during the quarter; that I should not allow her to have her book only when she read the exercises, and the rest of the time she could amuse herself about whatever she pleased to pass away the time, provided she did not disturb the school. After this she left me, seeming to be better satisfied of the girl's safety, but she did not believe I could teach her in this new way very soon; she thought there was not enough study in it. This scholar went nearly all the quarter, was unwell a few days, which kept her out of school, but, like the rest who take the *direct* system course, *she learned to read.* I saw her in the Sabbath-school a short time after my school closed. They told me she re-

cited the lessons, and could read very well in the Testament, and this her father assured me to be the fact; said she could read in the Testament very well, and that she went regularly to Sunday-school. He seemed very much delighted.

In the winter of 1855, I taught school in Remsen village, where I had from sixty to eighty scholars that attended daily, among whom I had a class of thirty abecedarians and word readers. In this class I had one boy who had been sent a distance of fourteen miles expressly to attend my school. He was about ten years old, had been to school some years; could not read at all, but knew his letters. He belonged to a family that were noted for learning, and boarded with Dr. W. Griswold, a distant connection of his. After arriving in town to go to school, the doctor, seeing his ignorance, and being an old school-teacher himself, kept him in his office a considerable time, where he endeavored to instruct him to read, that he might be able to enter upon his course something better than a beginner. But all to no use, as he assured me when he came to the schoolroom with him, saying he was unable to make the least perceptible impression on him, and did not be-

lieve it in my power to teach him to read and spell. Nothing discouraged, I put him in the abecedarian and word-reading class. Here I kept him, being obliged to use constant force to secure his attention to the reading exercises, which were reading words in Cobb's New Spelling-book in six parts. Six weeks after this I saw the doctor, when he assured me he begun to think I would teach his boy to read. Three months after this, Mrs. Griswold visited the school, out of curiosity, to see how I managed to teach her boy to read. She acknowledged herself convinced of the propriety of the system, and was much delighted to hear the boy read so fluently. Soon after this I saw the doctor, when he told me the boy had become an independent reader, being able to read any of his medical works, etc., and still this boy had not a moment of extra training during the school.

In the summer of 1855 and winter of 1856, I taught school in Trenton village. During the summer term I had two scholars, two boys, six years of age. One knew his letters when he entered the school, and the other was a little more advanced. The latter was very small of his age, and ran away from a school taught by a young lady of superior education, and

much experience in teaching, and entered my school after it had been some time in progress He was a boy of bad habits, and I endeavored not to receive him; but after hearing the cause of his leaving the other school, I concluded to take him. And here, for the purpose of showing the material I had to work in this instance, and the various expedients resorted to to teach young children to read, permit me to tell what frightened this young lad from his school. He had a lesson in Sanders's Green Primer that contained the word pig, which he pronounced hog, and the teacher, after laboring a long time to have him pronounce it pig, and failing to make him do so, at last concluded to hang him up with a cord, after which he still persisted in calling it hog as before. After this last expedient had failed, he was let down, when he took the first opportunity to run away. What led this young tyro astray in this instance was the picture of a hog on the same page, and not a pig, as he affirmed, to which he referred the word for pronunciation; and here I will say I hope the author of that work will insert the unmistakable picture of a pig instead of a hog, to save our young scholars from a like fate. In less than sixty days after this, those two boys

could read well in Sanders's No. 3, and went to Sunday-school, and read and recited in the Testament with the rest of the school.

At the commencement of the winter term, I had two scholars, one Yankee boy, six years old, and one German boy, seven years old; the first knew most of the letters, the latter none. They both learned to read the Testament in less than four months, and went to Sabbath-school regularly. They read words only in the spelling-book while in school. The boy who had the misfortune to be hung, and the other mentioned in connection with him, attended about four months during the winter term, at the close of which they could read in Sweet's Elocution with much propriety.

Numerous other examples might here be given from this school and others. This school averaged during the winter term, five months, fifty-three and a half scholars per day; had no assistant. During December, January, and February, I had from sixty-five to seventy-five scholars per day; twenty in grammar, eighteen in geography, thirty-five in arithmetic, forty in writing. One young man, eighteen years of age, from a distance, attended this school eight months for the ex-

press purpose of learning to read. He became a fair reader. He also, during that time, went through Mitchell's Geography and the ground rules in arithmetic.

In the fall of 1857, I attended the Teachers' Institute at Utica, where, as chairman of a committee for reporting the best method for teaching vocal reading, spelling and articulation, I reported substantially—the Direct System as set forth in this manual. The report being an entirely new system, elicited much debate. Prof. Johonnot, Commissioner Fowler, and others, took the floor in its favor. It was unanimously adopted. Subsequently I have been requested by Commissioner Fowler to attend the Institute to be held next fall at Utica, to give the teachers of our county Oneida a thorough drill in this method of teaching. Our commissioner also informs me that he is introducing this system into the schools in his district to a considerable extent, but sees the great want of a manual to enable teachers to make the desired change.

Thus I have given a hasty sketch of the rise and progress, thus far, of the direct system. It is, of course, only now in its infancy, and has as yet been a blessing to only a few; but if it is what I believe it to be, and claim for it,

I hope the time is not far distant when it shall become a blessing to all throughout the world, who have to learn the English language—freeing parents and guardians from many expenses now had to educate their children, and saving them from years of toil and suffering in learning to read, making the business of learning to read pleasurable, and alike delightsome to children, teachers, and parents.

CLASSING SCHOLARS IN SCHOOL,

AND WHAT BOOKS TO BE USED.

It will be observed that the following applies no further than spelling and reading classes are concerned, and that this arrangement applies to county school district schools, where a teacher has scholars of every grade in his school, from the abecedarian to those in the highest branches taught in our schools. From the arrangement here made, I think it will be perfectly plain for other schools to class their scholars on this principle. It will be seen that scholars of very different attainments can be in the same class with perfect

propriety, the exercises being varied to the capacities of each scholar, and yet in a manner to be equally interesting to the smallest and largest scholar in the school. The abecedarians will necessarily have to be considered one class in school, although it is much better for the teacher, and infinitely better for the scholar to place *them in* the first class of word readers, as in that class the teacher is supposed to pronounce each scholar's word for him, and to aid him to read the letters and pronounce it for him whenever he is unable to do so himself. Such scholars should invariably be of sufficient age and mind to keep their places, or capable of being readily taught to do so. Here, if they keep their places (and if they do not, they had better be out of school), they will be able to see and hear the letters named at the commencement of their going to school, at least one hour each day, besides taking an equal part in the exercises themselves. But in a little time they will be able to look over and take part in the second class of word readers, and finally, with the class of spellers, at which time they can have an exercise in their letters, and in reading words, from two to three hours each day, which is a great advantage over the old

method, as that would afford the young beginner but about four minutes a day in which to learn his letters. Thus it will be profitable to have the abecedarians merged into the first class of word readers, as soon as possible, and they may go in at once, if the teacher choose, which is the better way. Hence we will consider the abecedarian class and the first class of word readers as one class.

The next, or second class, read words in the same manner as the first class, the teacher pronouncing each scholar's word, and the scholar reading it on the book, the teacher encouraging as many as can read their words correctly to do so without his assistance. This, however, should not be done, unless the scholar is able to do it with dispatch, pronouncing the word before and after he reads it, so that all the class may know what the word is before it is read, and afterward. The third class in the spelling-book comprises all the school, the class being divided into three divisions. The abecedarians, or first class of word readers, the second class of word readers, and those who are able to spell, without missing very often. If scholars miss, they might as well keep their books open all the time. The first and second class divisions will have their books open all

the time during the exercise; the third division will have their books in their hands, and will close them when they are required to spell; they also will have a variety of exercises to perform with their books open, in concert with the first and second divisions, and when a scholar in this misses his word in spelling, he is required to open his book and read it, or the word may better be read by the other divisions of the class. And when any scholar has found his way into the third division of this class that causes much delay, either by not spelling correctly, or by not readily finding his word when he misses it, let him go into the second division. The spelling-book exercises for each class will be fully explained hereafter.

There will be but two reading classes needed in school. In no case should there be a reading class in a book smaller than Town's Second Reader, or Sander's, Webb's, and Town's Third Readers. The second class should have the best elocutionary work which the school is able to procure, such as Sanders' and Town's No. 5, or Sweet's, Zachos' and Marshall's Elocution. This arrangement of classes will be such as to enable school-teachers to bestow much time in teaching his school *words*, which is the most impor-

tant study a school can be engaged in, till they are able to spell and read well. But where the arrangement of classes are such as they are now generally in schools, the teacher has no time to dictate words to his school. His whole time being taken up in teaching a multitude of what is generally called reading classes, but more properly story-learning classes, in the green primers, and No. 1 readers, together with a lot of half-minute spelling-lessons, and perhaps a little class in mental arithmetic, who cannot read words of two syllables correctly, and a class in a little child's Geography, who have seen so little of the world, and their little minds have learned so little of common things, as not to see much difference between a lake and a mill-pond—a mud-puddle and the Atlantic Ocean. The wise man tells us there is *a time for everything.* Fellow school-teachers, suffer not the propensities and blindness of the present age to drive you from your proper work. First teach your scholars to read and spell *words;* do this in a thorough manner, and when it is once done, your scholars will be able, without your help, to read the Bible, the news of the day, law, medicine, or divinity, and every book whatever in the language, much better and earlier

than they now do. I know it is said by a host of learned small-fry educators, that a scholar should be taught words no faster than they are able to apply them to reading-lessons. This, in the main, I hold to be an impossibility, knowing the words, they would know how to apply them. Again, on this principle, we could never teach a child the alphabet, or the most common arts of husbandry. On this principle we should never let our sons use a hoe, or an axe, a plough, or a scythe, till they knew perfectly well how to hoe a field of corn, to chop down our forests, to plough our fields, or to cut the grass of our meadows. It is this doctrine that is turning the spelling-book out of our schools, and reducing them to a size that renders them nearly useless in teaching the language.

Give children, then, by every consideration, a knowledge of words, and like implements of husbandry in their hands, the occasion, circumstance, and necessity will show them how to apply them, and perfect them in their use. Give children, then, a thorough knowlege of words, even no more than to the amount contained in some of our largest spelling-books, and they will be better off than they would were they to read any series of reading-books

that ever were printed. Give children words, and they will find a way to use them, as readily as a boy would find out the way to use a sharp hatchet.

I know parents and guardians are pleased to have their children learn to read sentences, and so they should be; and when they send a little son or daughter to school, and he comes home in a few weeks and is able to read, or more properly, recite in the main, some little story from (or in if you please) a small reader, they are greatly delighted, and without reflection think their little son or daughter has got along finely, when in fact, they have learned nothing of consequence about reading. If they would allow themselves to make a proper examination, they would find to their regret that they had learned a story by heart more than they had learned to read it by any knowledge of the words composing the sentences. On this subject teachers should bestow much attention. I have often, when first going into a new school, and seeing the little ones come in loaded with books that were perfectly unfit for them, been sickened and discouraged at the prospect that lay before me. For here, if I should give way to the current that was setting against

me, it would render my service of very little use to them. And if I changed the order of their studies I should have to make a world of apologies and explanations to them and their parents, which would impose a vast amount of extra labor on me; but feeling much responsibility resting on me, and fortunately for me, late years having some prominent inhabitants in the district that knew and approved my method of teaching school, I have had no great difficulty in making the necessary changes, except the extra labor it naturally incurs. I hope that teachers to whom this manual shall come, will have both the moral and physical courage necessary to enable them to make the changes in the mode of instructing the young, here set forth, and I feel assured, if they at first cannot carry it into effect as skillfully as an old experienced teacher therein, they will do even at first a vast deal better than they can possibly in the old way of instruction. Try it, friends; send all the little green, pictorial primers and first readers home, and perhaps many of the second readers—all at least for a season—and every kind of baby books, and get you a large, well-classified-spelling book, and teach the little and the big both to read and spell,

and key their words on the book and off the book, and you will never have occasion to stand, and point out, and pronounce words in reading books as you have done and you will never see the tribe of little books you sent away return. Your scholars will need larger and more advanced books, and will thank you to the end of their lives for having taught them to read in the direct method.

Cobb's New Spelling-book is the only one I know of that is properly arranged to meet the wants of the direct system of instruction. The United States Spelling-book might be used if its pronunciation was not an innovation on all our standard works. Sanders' has a good classification, but it contains too few words. The elementary contains too few words, and its marks of reference are not in all respects convenient for children. Town's has no classification as far as pronunciation is concerned to make it available in this method.

METHOD OF

TEACHING THE ALPHABET.

The alphabet is usually taught in the direct method. When the attention of the learner can constantly be secured and a corresponding effort made by the teacher, children generally learn it in a few days; but it seldom happens that this is done. For most generally the scholar is hurried through his lesson in a manner that renders it impossible for him to remember any part of it. The exercise generally had is to call the alphabet over twice to the scholar. If we allow one second for the time of pronouncing each letter, we see the whole exercise is over in less than a minute. But when the teacher is hurried by a press of business, which is generally the case, they repeat it much faster, and frequently go over it but once. But allowing one minute of time for the abecedarian to say his lesson, and allowing him to have four lessons a day, we see he has but four minutes in a day to learn his letters; and allowing

sixty days to the quarter, it will leave him four hours during that time in which to learn his letters. Thus, the great mystery why children do not learn the letters sooner is easily discovered. The greatest wonder of all is, how they learn them at all in this manner. Some, indeed, may say that there is more time given to the abecedarian in our schools generally; but from my own observation I firmly believe that in the aggregate they do not have more time. But in very many instances there is not over one half the time given them that I have here allowed. But suppose them to have twice as much time given them, they would then have but eight hours in the quarter, which is far too little time to learn the alphabet. Then, give them sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, or one hundred and twenty hours, or even more than that amount, so that they may have a proper *chance* to learn their letters. "Oh, but," say you, "it is impossible; this can never be done, for it is totally out of the question for a teacher to spend anything like that amount of time with the young scholar." Not too fast, fellow-teacher, not too fast; it is perfectly easy when we know how; and where there is a will there is a way, and if any

teacher wishes to know the way, he has only to read *The Philosophy of Teaching the Young to Read* and the *way* will be perfectly plain to him.

It is reasonable that every one who goes to school should be engaged in some useful study or exercise. The young scholar by himself cannot study his letters nor his spelling lessons at first. He must be *aided* in learning these or he will not learn them in a very long time. Again, under the present *indirect* method of teaching the young, it is impossible for the teacher to bestow only a very little time each day upon the abecedarian and the young word reader. Hence the imperative necessity of a change in our school system that will enable the school-teacher to come to the immediate aid of the young scholar, by giving him a suitable exercise that will enable him to read words correctly, thus preparing him to help himself. For at *no* period of his study will he ever need one hundredth part of the help that he claims here. The abecedarians, when there is only a few of them, may, in a very few days, be put into the first class of word readers, whether they know their letters fully or not, for here I mainly teach children their letters. But sup-

posing a teacher had a hundred beginners in the alphabet (and he could manage even double that number of orderly attentive scholars), let him give each of them a spelling-book and direct them to begin at A, and speak the letters in concert, moving down or up at the direction of the teacher. The teacher saying A in a loud distinct manner, and the whole class looking at the letter and speaking it in concert after him distinctly, and with quantity; then let the teacher point out its distinctive features to the class, the class all the time looking at the letter while hearing the remarks of the teacher. When in the estimation of the teacher the class has dwelt on that letter long enough, let him say "down," when all the class should move down to B, the teacher pronouncing it as before, and the class speaking it after him, and so on as before. In this way a teacher could keep a class of abecedarians at work during the entire day, and no one could well avoid learning the letters in a few days. This exercise would be applicable to a large class of young men that were learning to read. I sincerely hope there will be many such classes formed when the direct system becomes known.

But suppose a few were inattentive, the teacher could easily select them out and give them a separate exercise for their special benefit, while the rest of the class were resting or looking over. But I should recommend a teacher of such a class to put them into spelling lessons without waiting for every one to learn all the letters perfectly. Scholars will look with more attention at the letters when they are going to form a word with them, and think harder to call their names correctly than when they are going to say them singly in the alphabet; and this being true, they will learn the letters faster, and also how to read words at the same time. A teacher should have each scholar take his turn in reading occasionally, so as to test his progress, or if he cannot make the exercise interesting in so large a class, he should divide it into smaller classes. But here there would be danger of letting the time of many run to waste. I think a teacher can interest a large number of scholars as well as a few where the lesson is alike needed by all. I have had, in a few instances, two hundred, and frequently one hundred in a class for an experiment, and I found no difficulty in gaining their attention and keeping them to their

work. Practice and close observation would soon enable a teacher to instruct a large number of scholars on this principle. And I have not the least doubt but that a teacher could take from one to two hundred scholars, and in from four to six months teach them to be very good readers; and I would here say, there is no employment I could engage in with so much pleasure as to demonstrate this practically to the world, and if any of the friends of education in Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, or any other convenient place should see fit to make an arrangement by which this might be fully tested, I will hold myself ready to enter upon it at the earliest opportunity.

What would be the effect on the American character, if a teacher had the power of teaching a hundred or more scholars to read during one winter? How many thousands of the grown up multitudes that come here from the the old world would educate themselves, who now remain in servile ignorance, selling their vote, perhaps, on election-day for a drink of grog. If our schools were conducted on this principle it would be a great corrector for many evils we now endure both politically and socially. It would give sight to

the blind, and be a stronger bulwark for the defence of our liberties than all our fleets and armies.

EXERCISING THE

FIRST CLASS OF WORD READERS.

The first class of word readers are supposed to know their letters perfectly, although this is not often the case at the beginning of a school. They should keep their places correctly, and look on with much attention; they may differ considerably in their attainments in reading without any disadvantage to any one in the class, as they take a new lesson every time they read, and consequently no one in the class is delayed in his lessons on the account of others, the poorest scholar in the class not taking but a very little more time than the best one, as the teacher helps him on with his word when he is unable to help himself; but the best scholar will have all he can do to keep his place and see all the words as they pass. This class will never shut up their books to spell, but the scholar reads the word after the teacher puts it out

to him, and likewise pronounces it; but if he should be unable to pronounce it after he has read the letters, the teacher should tell him how to do it, and then put out a word to the next scholar, and so on through the lesson. In this way the scholar will learn the words as a whole by hearing them pronounced, and their distinctive features by reading the letters, and also learn to spell very rapidly, as he first has the word pronounced for him while attentively beholding it; he reads and pronounces it, making an impression on his memory, both through the medium of sight and hearing, whereas, if his book were closed, his memory could only be impressed through the medium of hearing alone. But now, having the sense of hearing and seeing united, the sense of seeing being the most perfect, his mind must be more than two fold more deeply impressed, and consequently he learns to spell more than twice as fast as he can learn to spell with his book closed. But this is not all. A class exercised on this principle goes over three or four times more words in the same time than they would if their books were closed, consequently, in the aggregate, they would learn to spell about ten times faster, besides learning to read; whereas, in

the other case, it is clear they do not learn to read at all, that is when they have their books closed,

"If any spark of life be yet remaining."

With the patience of the reader, I will give this old sytem another thrust, for I know well with what tenacity this old, long cherished error clings to life. In the direct method a teacher can take a class through more spelling matter in twenty minutes than he can on the guessing system in an hour—no, this is a mistake, for in the guessing system, they seldom, if ever get through regularly—for in that a teacher never can tell whether he is ever going to get through regularly or not. But in the direct system he can calculate to a minute the time it will need to take a class through a page of spellings, thus making his school exercises regular, which is a great gain to any teacher or school. But the guessing system throws everything into confusion and darkness, compelling the teacher to give out lessons so small, in order to dispatch them properly, that he cannot advance but very slowly in the book, and seldom goes through a large spelling-book in a term, and as it is customary to begin the book anew at the

commencement of each term, it is seldom a school is taken through the book. But when a teacher does give large lessons in order to get his school through the book he never goes through the lessons regularly, and never calls near all the words in the lesson, but goes on a while, taking the words in order till he sees he is not going to get through in that way, when he begins to skip half, and finally two-thirds of the words; and at last, having consumed all the time, he abandons the lesson altogether. Thus it is a great amount of words in our spelling-books are never brought before the school.

Again, this spelling words wrong in the hearing of the school has a very pernicious effect upon the school in general. For hearing them spelt so many different ways distracts their minds, and prevents them from remembering the right way of spelling them. Where words are very generally read and spelt correctly, it has a good effect on the school. I can give living and overwhelming testimony on this subject. I have a school now in my mind which learned to spell on the direct system and never closed their books, but a very little in the school—scholars I will pit against the world for spelling;

this, as far as our town is concerned, has been actually tested. But to the astonishment and confusion of those sticklers for shutting up the spelling-book, a class of little girls and boys trained on this principle, spelled down five schools and their teachers with the greatest ease, which gave a lasting rebuke to this class of educators in our town. Now, the theory and practice are alike honored. Again, by closing the book many learn to spell, although at this slow guessing rate much better than they can read. I know many of this class. I have no doubt but there are many thousands of scholars in this condition, and may live and die in it, unless the direct system should save some of them. I will mention one case of this kind, who is rather the best specimen of the kind I ever knew. He is eighteen or nineteen years old; he has been to school winters for eight or ten years past; he is of sound mind, but the school he attended never read spelling lessons. He read words as a whole in our little readers, saying them after the teacher, and hearing them read by the scholars till he can repeat a considerable number of these interesting little stories; he also can spell very well in the Elementary spelling-book, but he cannot read

and pronounce scarcely any of the words in the book, nor read the most simple sentence correctly from a knowledge of the words. He is a foreigner, but speaks the English language very well; he had no one at home to show him, and he is a perfect specimen of what our schools would do undisturbed by other influences. His parents are wealthy, and put unwavering confidence in our schools, especially this one, as it was kept by one of their own countrymen. What must be their feelings to see their son, thus nearly grown up to manhood and not able to read, and all through the inefficiency of our schools, and by the indirect method of instruction which they pursue? What more could this young man do to learn to read than he did, blindfolded and handcuffed as he was? Did he not learn the stories they repeated to him, and spell the words as they dictated them to him? Most certainly he did. The fact is, that spelling in this manner is nothing more than a test of what we do know, and when a scholar is not sufficiently acquainted with a word to spell it understandingly, he had much better look and read it than to have his teacher tell him how to spell words, which in many cases, he is unable even to read or pro-

nounce in a reading lesson. But admitting he did understand them, and even know how to read and pronounce them, if he should look at them again in a book it would be perfecting his acquaintance with them, and he would be more likely to call them correctly on any occasion for having frequently seen them and read them many times. But another advantage is when they learn in the direct manner they learn the words as a whole by sight, and in their elementary parts, so that they are the better prepared to speak them understandingly and readily in a reading lesson. Let me give another case calculated to throw some light on this subject, showing the absurdity of the former and present practice of requiring young beginners to *study* spelling and reading lessons.

There is a man whom I have been intimately acquainted with for more than fifty years who was sent to school two weeks when he was five years old, where he learned his letters perfectly, and to read the ab's and words of three letters contained in the first lessons of the old *easy standard* spelling-book, such as Bay, Cay, etc., for which he received a great deal of praise from his teacher and parents. After this he was sent to school one

winter and one summer term some distance from home to a celebrated teacher, one old Doctor Allen, I think; he was a fine man, every way, and a good teacher in a qualified sense. Here this scholar sometimes read alone, and sometimes in a small class, taking lessons to study and spell in the above-named spelling-book, beginning with words of four letters, such as Bind, Find, etc. During the winter term he got through the first lessons of words of four and five letters, and got to the Baker table and read a column or two in that table. During the summer term he advanced as far as the Crucifix table. In all, during the winter and summer terms, less than eight pages, containing in all one thousand and thirty-nine words. I cannot tell how many weeks each term contained, but at least from twelve to sixteen, making his attendance, in any case, at least six months. I can assure the reader it seemed much longer to him. And what did this little boy learn all this long time? Why, the nearest thing possible to nothing at all. 'Tis true, he had learned to spell every word he had gone over, for the good old doctor would not have let him passed a word which he could not spell for a world. But although he could spell the

words in the book thus far I am sure he could not read them as well as he could spell them, and was quite unable to pronounce them at sight in a reading-book. He took from four to six words to a lesson, seldom read the lesson to his teacher, was supposed by the teacher to be able to read them sufficiently to study them to advantage, because his teacher required him to do so; this, however, was not the fact in his case, and is not the fact as far as any other beginner is concerned, that ever was or ever will be. And hence the importance of the direct system to each and every one that has yet to learn to read, and to those who have children to be taught to read. I am well assured, from the experience I have had in it that its importance is beyond all computation, and teachers who may hereafter adopt it will see advantages emanating from it that at first quite escaped their observation. Kind reader, pardon me for this digression. Did this little boy *study* his lessons? I think I am a good witness in this case, and I must say he did not, but very little indeed, nearly the smallest amount imaginable that amounted to anything to his advantage; he made a show of study, and did the best he could, but could call no word right unless it

was by accident; did not know when he called it right or wrong; knew he could not study, but tried to please his teacher; sat on a slab bench seven months, that was so high he could not touch the floor with his feet by several inches; swung his feet a good deal to keep his back from aching and his knees from becoming stiff; held a spelling-book in his hand during school hours; wore out a spelling-book each term, so that it fell to pieces mainly by holding it in his sweaty hands; lost all his courage for learning; felt friendly to the old doctor; should have run away from school had he not been so very kind to him; thought he could never learn the book through; became so averse to going to school, and circumstances withal being unfavorable, that he did not attend but very little after that; went to farming for a livelihood; had a great desire for an education as he became grown up to manhood; had little confidence in schools; learned many things taught in school, at home.

So we see the effect of the indirect system of instruction was not good in this instance, for it was the means of turning the mind of this little boy, for the whole period of his youth, from schools, and thus virtually shut-

ting him out for life from the joys of a refined education. You may say that our schools are better now, but I think they are not. I have travelled considerably several years past, visiting schools. I have no time to go into any statistical accounts of them here. They can be seen and should be *read* by all men. Children seldom learn their letters and abs in less than six months, in our schools quite often they are a year in learning them. In New York there are thousands that are reading very poorly in Sanders' Second Reader, from eight to twelve years old. I heard a large number of scholars of this last kind mentioned, read in Sanders' Second Reader in one of those schools where the head teacher is paid by the board of education but little less than two thousand dollars a year. It is said to be one of the very best schools in the city, and I believe it should have that reputation. I asked its able principal how long it took to advance boys as forward in reading as those who were reading before us (which was a large class in Sanders' Second Reader). He said he thought it generally took from two to two and a half years' steady time. What need had I of looking further? this teacher's opinion was, in New York, considered the

very highest authority. Who can imagine my feelings while sitting and hearing this class read for three quarters of an hour? I knew to a certainty that the direct system, beyond any doubt, would have taught them to read much better in less than one fourth of the time.

But, says one, this putting out words to scholars, and their reading them on the book, seem like children's play to me. All the better for being children's play, if we can succeed as well; we need a system that is just as common and simple as the air we breathe. Allow me to answer this objection by saying I have, from a very early age, been engaged in farming, notwithstanding I have kept school considerably. I have ever had a farm to take care of. I have broke or trained many a yoke of young steers, and many a colt to work. The way I did it, I used to contrive to get the yoke on the steers, and then hitch the old oxen on before them, and so start ahead. To be sure they went quite wild at first, but every day's practice made them better, and they had the old cattle to look to for an example, and finding they took it all very quietly, they soon became as orderly and as well-trained workers as the old oxen.

In breaking colts, after bitting them, I put them in by the side of a strong, steady horse, and as in the case of the oxen, we went ahead. I expected a colt to take some unnecessary steps, and sometimes to exert himself a little too much, and sometimes not quite enough, perhaps, but having the example of a kind, gentle horse, and by prudence in driving him, he very soon became a good, manageable work-horse. In each case there was nothing required of them but what they would easily perform, and so they soon learned to work. But, supposing we had, after yoking up the steers, hitched them to a rock that it was impossible for them to move, and kept them chained up there six months, or a year, urging them forward by persuasion and force, would they not, for all working purposes, in all probability, be ruined for life? Why, most certainly they would. And so in like manner, if we had hitched the colt to a stump, and coaxed and urged him to draw it out, would it not have proved his ruin? Yes, beyond any doubt whatever; and in case he had been balked in this manner, a few minutes at the commencement of his learning work, it might have depreciated his value one-half or three-fourths,

and rendered him an outcast, and a fit subject for horse-jockeys for life.

Then why not use as much good common sense in educating our children, as in breaking steers and colts. It is true it may look like our children's play to *you*, and so may it look like children's play to *you* to see old Farmer Steady, with his boys and hired men, parading the streets with a yoke of oxen and steers drawing an empty sled, or training around with his old John horse, and brown colt, drawing an empty sleigh, with a lot of wide-awake boys sometimes running on foot, and sometimes riding. But an old experienced eye can see in both of these a principle that will work the best results for the education of the young, as well as for training animals for the use of man.

EXERCISES APPLICABLE

TO THE

SECOND CLASS OF WORD READERS.

First, let the teacher put out the words to the class, each scholar having his book open and his eye attentively on the word, and each reading in rotation distinctly, and yet with all possible dispatch; let them read part of their lesson in this manner. Second, should it be an easy lesson, or should some easy words occur in the lesson, then let these be pronounced in concert, or let them pronounce one, two, or three words apiece in rotation, speaking their words with deliberation and with quantity. Pronouncing words is a short way of studying them. No one can pronounce words correctly, unless by imitation or theory. To do it theoretically he must know how many syllables there are in a word, and know which the accented syllable is, and also, what the vowel sound is contained in that syllable; scholars may learn to pronounce correctly by imitation, but it is impor-

tant that they should learn to do this from theory, which can very easily be done in a well classified spelling-book, as I shall show in the third class exercises. Third, when the words are long and difficult to spell, pronounce them to the class, and let the class read them in concert, reading slow, and the teacher marking time for them with a pencil on a slate, or otherwise. The teacher should give each one time to read his syllable before he gives the signal for reading the next syllable. I think this is the fastest way of any to teach a class to read and spell; it takes more time to read a lesson in this way, but its effect is tremendous, making a deep and lasting impression on the mind.

I would advise teachers to practise it considerably, especially those that are so far advanced as to generally read the words correctly; but supposing some one should be unable to read his word right, if he is attentive he will hear numerous voices, before him and behind him, and on every side of him, distinct and clear, telling him every letter and syllable, and how to pronounce it when read. But a class of any size, even containing one or two hundred, could not endure the labor that one teacher could impose on them in this exercise, and consequently, he

would have to vary the exercise to save the strength of the school.

I have found, that a class of attentive word-readers, after reading the spelling-book through a few times, know how to spell better than those that have been to school on the old *indirect system* several years, and when they had thus read the book through, there is very little comparatively left for them to study.

Teachers should exercise this class daily in learning the vowel and diphthongal sounds. This can generally be done to the best advantage in country district schools, in the third class, which is composed of the whole school, being divisions No. 1, 2, and 3, for which full directions will be given. Schools composed entirely of word readers will follow the directions there given, to learn the vowel and diphthongal sounds.

EXERCISES FOR THIRD CLASS

COMPOSED OF

SPELLERS AND WORD READERS.

It should be borne in mind, that divisions No. 1 and 2 of this class should have their own appropriate exercises apart from the class, and their position in the class should be such as not to be in the way of division number third; for this there is no difficulty if the teacher rightly adapts the exercises, and enforces attention and promptness on the part of each scholar. The teacher will put out words to the whole class, the third division spelling with their books closed, and keying the words. The second division reading the word on the book, and keying it in like manner. The first division only reading their words after they are pronounced by the teacher; the second and third divisions keying the words of the first division in concert. This is an important exercise, and should be had in school daily. This exercise, however,

cannot be had unless the class have a well classified spelling-book. I never have found one equal in all respects to Cobb's. It is true, I should have liked it a little better if it had been conformed to Webster's orthography and pronunciation, but I have found that scholars who get Cobb's speller thoroughly, are perfectly able to help themselves to Webster's pronunciation, so that it is not so very important which system they learn first, for if they understand the theory of one system, they can, with the least effort of their own, learn all others; and so, on the whole, I deem it rather an advantage to the scholar to learn Walker's first.

The importance of learning the vowel and diphthongal sounds is very great, and no practice or system ever had has given the great mass of our schools a knowledge of them; but the method of learning them here laid down, will make them understood by all who go to school, so that if they know anything about reading, they will understand all about the vowel sounds; and when they have attained to this, they will not stop here with their inquiries, but will become acquainted with the elementary sounds of the English language generally.

Children should learn the elementary sounds while in the second and third divisions. The first division, however, frequently know considerable about them. Teachers should be constant in keeping the subject before the school in a great variety of exercises. First, in the manner above stated. Second, by having them spell or read the words of their lesson by speaking the vowel sounds and not the name of the letter. Third, by reading or spelling the words by the sounds of the letters, and not by the names of the letters. Fourth, by having the school pronounce the vowel sounds of the accented syllables contained in the words in concert, after the teacher pronounces the word to the class. Fifth, let each scholar in rotation pronounce the vowel element alone, the teacher putting out the words as before. Sixth, let the whole class read in concert in slow time, the teacher keeping the time of the syllables* with a pencil on a slate, and the class after reading and pronouncing the word, speak the vowel element in concert. Seventh, read and pronounce the same as before, and let the scho-

* The class will be able to keep the time properly after a little practice without this aid from the teacher.

lars in the class take turns in speaking the vowel elements. Eighth, let each scholar in the second and third divisions read and key a word. Ninth, let the whole class pronounce in concert, speaking slowly and scarcely above a whisper, prolonging the sound as much as possible. Tenth, let the whole class pronounce in concert in slow time, speaking with much quantity, and keying the words in concert. Eleventh, let the class read in quick time, not marking the time of the syllables. Occasionally let them read and key the words in concert in quick time. The class should never take less than a page of spelling matter for a lesson. All the above exercises should be had every day; some of the most important should occupy the most time, others but a small portion. Teachers will be able to discriminate according to circumstances; they should never leave out the exercise of keying words, that is, it should be had in every lesson to a considerable extent; it does not take up much time. Scholars should be required to study spelling lessons after they can do so understandingly, never before in any case whatever. This, however, in this mode of instruction, they will be able to do in a little time. In addition to the above exer-

cises, the teacher should exercise the class once a day in the elementary sounds of the letters—of course he would take but a few of them for each lesson; he might spend two or three minutes at the close of each spelling exercise, beginning with the vowel and diphthongal sounds (tonics vocals) as they are the most important; after which he should proceed to the consonant sounds, subtonics, and atonics. Here let the teacher not compel the class to commit to memory the definitions of the elementary sounds of the letters no faster than he shows the class their practical use. Beginning with the key, let the teacher ask the class what a vowel is; they should read from the book the general definition. Then let the teacher explain their nature and use, something like the following: That the accented syllable in a word is the governing syllable; that the accented syllable contains a vowel, the sound of which gives character to the word; that the vowels have different sounds, in different words, which different sounds are indicated by figures placed over the words in the spelling columns and also over standard words to aid us the better to understand them.

That No. 1 represents the long sound of *a*,

e, *i*, *o*, *u*, *w*, and *y*, as in *fate*, *me*, *pine*, *no*, *tube*, *dew*, *fly*.

No. 2. The flat sound of *a*, as in *far*.

No. 3. The long broad *a* and *o*, as in *fall*, *nor*.

No. 4. The short sound of *a*, *e*, *i*, *u*, and *y*, as in *fat*, *met*, *pin*, *tub*, *system*.

No. 5. The short broad *a* and *o*, as in *not*, *what*.

No. 6. The sound of *oo*, proper or slender, as in *to*, *rule*, *crew*.

No. 7. The sound of short *oo*, or obtuse *u*, as in *good*, *bull*.

No. 8. Short *u*, made by *e*, *i*, and *o*, as in *her*, *stir*, *dove*.

No. 9. The sound of long *a*, made by *e*, as in *they*.

No. 10. The sound of long *e*, made by *i*, as in *shire*.

No. 11. The sound of short *e*, made by *i*, as in *firm*.

After explaining the key to them, let them read the answers to questions on each number. Also let them answer the questions on the diphthongs. When they understand these perfectly, then let them begin with the consonants and the sounds of the compound characters and combination of letters. If the

attention of the class is called to these during the spelling exercises the class will soon become acquainted with the elementary sounds at an age when they will be able to retain them in their memories, and get a practical use of them while going to school, so that they will fully appreciate them in after life.

FIRST READING CLASS.

This class having had a proper training in the spelling-book, will be able to begin Town's Second or Third Reader, or readers of like character for their first reading-book in school. I should prefer to have them read the spelling-book till they can begin with our third readers to good advantage. If teachers do begin with smaller reading-books they will not advance them as fast by so doing.

Let the teacher teach the class the pauses and marks used in writing or printing, by at first telling them the names of those characters. Then let the one at the head of the class read, and when he comes to the pause let him stop, while the rest of the class name the

pause. If it is a comma, let them say comma; if a period, let them say period, etc., the teacher telling them whenever they call the character wrong. When they have learned the names of all the characters in this manner, let them count the time of the pauses when they come to them, reading in like manner. Thus, when one scholar is reading, the rest of the class will count the time of the pauses, the reader pausing till the class counts the time distinctly in concert, by saying *one*, for a comma, *one*, *two*, for a semicolon, etc. Let the teacher see that every one in the class labors constantly with fixed attention in this exercise, as it is very important for scholars when they first begin to read, to be acquainted with the pauses, and use them practically in their first reading lessons. Second, let each scholar read to a pause and name it. Third, let each scholar read to a pause and count its time. Fourth, let each scholar read a word apiece, naming the pauses in connection therewith, as they occur in the sentences. Fifth, let each scholar read a syllable apiece, naming the pauses as before. Sixth, let the class read round, reading the words in the same manner they do spelling lessons. Seventh, the teacher should fre-

quently read to his class and have them name the pauses for him, and count their time. It is important to keep the attention of the class fixed on the words while being read. Scholars generally see but little that is read in their class more than to enable them to keep their places. Sometimes, indeed, they will count down to *their* verse, as they call it, and study it for the time being with wonderful energy and attention, so as to read it well when it comes to their turn. This is a great damage to the scholar who practises it, for he virtually sees but a very small part of his lesson.

Again, when a class has any fixed custom to read round a certain number of times, much evil may grow out of it; many pupils will be very inattentive after they have read for the last time, and where one shows inattention it is apt to extend through the class. A teacher should take no such formal method of reading, but should let his class know they are to be directed by him just according as he shall dictate to them for the time being. Hence he should say, "read a verse apiece," the class counting the time. But if he sees during the process gross inattention, he should say, "read a word apiece, and

speak the pauses in connection," or, "read a syllable apiece, naming the pauses as they occur," or take any of the above exercises which they most need. In this way the class will be compelled to see every part of their lesson which will early discipline them to habits of close attention.

SECOND READING CLASS.

This should consist of the most advanced scholars in school. None should belong to this class unless they are well versed in the elementary sounds of the language, for I should consider it impossible to make them good readers or speakers if they were ignorant of these. Exercises in articulation, usually introduced into our school readers, are but little understood, and are generally passed over with little interest; they are manifestly in the wrong place, and unless scholars learn articulation elsewhere, they will be very likely to remain ignorant of it. But scholars taught in the direct method will highly appreciate these, having learned articulation elsewhere, they

will be pleased with it here, as an exercise.

But the idea of learning scholars generally the elementary sounds of the English language from these exercises alone, is not practical, any more than the idea of teaching schools the elements from black-board or normal-chart exercises is practical. You cannot make it general enough in one sense, and in another you cannot make it particular enough. The whole school may respond and seem to know all about it, but when you come to test each one alone, he hesitates, and you will find but few who understand enough about it to do them any good. But in the direct system we have to pass over some thirteen thousand words (and when we have a spelling-book of twenty thousand words, it will be better still), so classified as to keep our minds constantly exercised on the subject—every scholar being easily tested, and having the subject plainly illustrated to him in so many thousand words, the knowledge of the elementary sounds becomes as familiar to him as his a b c, and he can appreciate these exercises, although he does not necessarily need them there. But to think of teaching our schools from these exercises alone is not practical.

The elocutionary instructions contained in most of our elocutionary works I most cheerfully indorse, and always endeavor to have those whom I have the honor to teach to read avail themselves of their able instructions. The exercises here set forth for the second reading class, are intended mostly to correct habits of bad articulation, and improper attention to the pauses while reading. I have practised them more than twenty years in my schools with the best success. When we had County Superintendents, they invariably gave my reading-class the preference in the county, and those who have visited my school have bestowed much praise on my reading classes —I speak this for the encouragement of others. These exercises are in part the same as those given for the first reading class. They should be practised just in proportion as the teacher may consider them most needed. If a class is not good in its observance of the pauses, let them count time. If they articulate hurriedly, let them read by syllables. If they pronounce incorrectly, take the reading down exercise. In every case taking an exercise they most need to correct them in any error they have in reading. First, reading and naming the pauses; Second, reading and counting the

time of the pauses; third, reading to a pause and naming it; fourth, reading to a pause, and counting the time; fifth, reading a word apiece, and naming the pauses as they occur; sixth, reading the syllables, and naming the pauses. Seventh—reading the words and keying them as in spelling columns; Eighth, let the class rise up and read a sentence, or more if they can; but if a scholar repeats a word or syllable, or utters any word improperly, or does not read it as it is pronounced in our dictionaries, or makes improper pauses or inflections, etc., let him sit down, and the next begin where he left off, and proceed in the same manner, and so on through the class, and perhaps several times round, those who lost the honor of standing up, reading in their turn as the rest of the class.

This is an exercise that scholars like to engage in, and from an experience or practice in it of many years, I am confirmed in believing it a very important one. It begets a sort of self-discipline not to be obtained in any other way. It greatly helps a scholar to possess himself in trying emergencies, and promotes a confidence in himself of what he can do if he but wills it. At first, let a class read

short sentences on this principle, and when they have become more advanced, let them read longer sentences, and finally, as long as they can read without a mistake. Again, this class should read in concert, and having been drilled thoroughly in articulation and the pauses, they can do so with very great beauty and effect. If they had not this elementary training, they would be totally unable to perform it; but having this, they can do it with propriety and pleasure. Occasionally let the class read dialogues, in concert, dividing the class into as many parts as the piece selected contains. Again, let them read two pieces in concert, that have much contrast to each other—such as Byron's Address to the Ocean, and Speech of Henry V. to his troops before the gates of Harfleur. This will teach them to change the key from the middle to a very high key, and from slow time and long quantity, to a loud and quick rate of utterance, or otherwise, as the pieces selected may indicate. Again, let all your school that read in readings, each select a piece once a week, and read it before the school. Teachers should aid their scholars somewhat in their selections, book the pieces chosen, and endeavor to have each scholar understand the nature of

his piece, and be prepared to read it with as much propriety as possible; this will greatly encourage scholars, and help them to become good readers and speakers with great rapidity.

GENERAL REMARKS AND CRITICISMS.

"Truth would you teach to save the sinking land,
All shun, none aid you, and few understand."

The faculties of the human mind most prominently put forth in childhood, seem not to be well understood. Educators take it for granted that that of *reason* is the one most to be relied upon in educating the young. This is a serious mistake; the faculty of reasoning being little used comparatively in childhood, and belonging more especially to that period of life called manhood. Children to the age of ten years, as a general rule, take things on *trust.* At this stage of life the faculties of observation, *imitation* and *memory* are strong, and may be said to be in their greatest perfection. Imitation at this period of life is the ruling genius of the mind, enabling it to speak and act whatever it hears or sees, while memory makes a faithful record which will remain as long as life endures. Hence, this is the time to *tell* children something.

"Take nature's path and mad opinions leave,
All states can reach it, and all heads conceive."

This is the fit time to teach them written as well as oral language. This may be done in the direct method almost *spontaneously* when compared with former modes of instruction.

"Our needful knowledge, like our needful food,
Unhedged, lies open in life's common field,
And bids all welcome to the vital feast."

The order of God's providence to man consists in the greatest and most needful blessings being the most easily obtained. Hence, it is unreasonable to believe that there is no way to teach spelling and reading in a much less expensive way, and a less tedious manner than that now in use.

But what can be said to arouse the world from its slumber on this important theme? It would seem that nothing less than the voice of God as uttered on Mount Sinai would arrest attention on this subject. The stupidity of those who give direction in educational matters is beyond all belief—even greater than that related of our fathers in olden time, who, when they went to mill on horse-back did not know how to divide the

grist in the sack to make it balance on the animal's back, by putting one half in each end of the bag, but put the grist in one end, and an equal amount of cobble stones in the the other to keep it down.

Thus, men who have stood at the head of educational matters, as far as spelling and reading are concerned, have always been driving their wedge butt end foremost, and quite recently one has arose who insists on driving the wedge butt end and tip end at the same time. To make the absurdity of those systems commonly set forth by educators to be practised by teachers more apparent to all, I will here instance a few of them which I wish every parent and teacher to carefully examine by the light of truth and common sense, believing their fallacy to be such that the most superficial cannot avoid seeing their impropriety, and thus avoid them as the mariner would those reefs on which others have foundered and lost their all. Their name is legion, but we will notice but a few of the most prominent, leaving the reader mainly to make his own criticisms, hoping that justice may be done to all concerned in the spirit of friendship.

The State Convention of county and town

Superintendents which met at Syracuse, April 22, 1845, speaks as follows :

"It is believed that the spelling-book is often introduced too early in the course, and relied upon too exclusively. It is recommended that at least *two elementary reading books* be mastered by the pupil before the *spelling-book* is placed in his hands, and that the lessons, instead of being studied from the book by the eye alone, be *written* upon slates, care being taken to preserve a perpendicular margin and horizontal lines. Spelling exercises may be profitably conducted as follows :

Suppose the school to be unused to the exercise, and many in the class unable to write with facility, from two to four weeks may be devoted to writing the lessons, in the place of studying them in the usual manner, and during this time spelling may be conducted without slates. This preliminary training will *generally* prepare the class to write readily, and slates should now be used in spelling. The teacher pronounces the words, and all write them simultaneously until the lesson is gone through with. The slates are then changed, the teacher taking a slate from the right, passes it to the left of the class, while the pupils pass their slates to the right. This is

done as quickly as the teacher can pass from one side of the class to the other. Each pupil has now the slate, and observes the work of his neighbor. The teacher reads each word, and as errors are seen, hands are raised and corrections made by those who committed the error. This is one method. Various others not differing materially from this, have been successfully practised. This practice of the schools corresponds with that of society, and the pupil that is thus habituated to *write* his words at school will find no difficulty in writing them elsewhere."

Webb's Normal Reader, No. 1, page 7, says, "The child in this part is *not* to be taught a *letter* or to *spell* a *word*, but is simply to learn the words by their *forms*, the same as he learns the names of animals by looking at them as a *whole*, *as an animal*, associating the *name* with its *form*."

Again, on page 8, note B: "We teach nothing but *words* and *reading* at first, leaving the *letters* and spelling till the 6th lesson, when it is believed the child will understand the *object* and *nature* of reading, and be prepared to *commence* the alphabet understandingly."

And again, on the 19th and 20th pages:

"PHONIC METHOD."

"*Note.*—The teacher may now pursue *either* of the following ways or any combination of them as may be thought best, though *we* give a *decided preference* to the *fourth*, or phonic method.

"1. The WORD METHOD, heretofore used may be continued, the words being taught from Col. 3.

"2. The words may be taught from Col. 3, spelled and letters learned from Cols. 2 and 1, as per note A to Directions for Teaching.

"3. The letters may be taught *first* from Col. 1 put together, or spelled as in Col. 2, and pronounced as in Col. 3. The spelling may be done in two ways—first, in the ordinary way, calling each letter by name; or second, by uniting the *last two* letters, as *a–n*, making *an*; then using this combination as one character with the letter preceding it, thus *m–an*, *man*. Of course these words as soon as learned will be read in connection with other words, as in the reading lesson following.

"4. *Phonic Method.*—The words may be taught by the *sounds* of their letters. First, teach the sound of *a*, then *n* (being careful if

there is a figure over a letter to teach that sound of the letter which this figure represents in our Table of Elements); require the pupil to utter these sounds in quick succession, as represented in Col. 2, till the combination in Col. 3 is distinctly given. Next, the sound of *m* should be taught and given in connection with the combination in Col. 3 as represented in Col. 2, till the perfect word in Col. 3 is heard. This word should now be read in the reading lesson below. When the next word, *fan*, is wanted, it can be had by simply teaching the letter *f*. As fast as new words are wanted they should be taught, and *no faster*. A similar course should be continued through Part Second, when the alphabet (except *q* and *z*) is learned, *its use*, and the use of words. If the teacher prefers, the *names* of the letters can be taught in connection with their sounds."

"Sargent's Standard Primer," second page, says:

"In this work the child's oral familiarity with certain words is made the basis of instruction in reading. Begin with teaching him words to which he attaches a meaning and not with letters to which he attaches none. The analytical process of spelling

should be subsequent to his acquaintance with the printed form of the word to be analyzed. It will be time enough to teach him the alphabet after he has learnt to read, and when you wish him to spell."

"Sargent's Standard First Reader," page third:

"It is now generally admitted that the *sounds* of the letters are best taught by showing their *powers* in words, as in so many instances their names do not correspond to their powers. The resolution of these words into letters of the alphabet is an analytical process which, in the order of things, should be *subsequent* to a knowledge of the words themselves."

Pages fourth and fifth:

"Most children learn the alphabet at home before going to school, but whether the child be familiar with it or not, let him begin his school labors with words and ideas instead of meaningless letters and syllables. The process here recommended is this: Begin with teaching the child to recognize and pronounce a few well-known words, such as are placed in large type in the first half of this volume. Let the words of lesson first be first selected. Pronounce a word without spelling it, while

pointing it out, and cause the children to pronounce it after you.

"Make the word as interesting as possible, by explanation, or by quoting instances of its daily use. Do not at first task the memory too much, but be content with very humble beginnings. If the whole lesson cannot be learned at the first trial, let half of it, or a single *word* suffice. After the words are learned let the sentence in which they are introduced be read, and to be sure that the sense of the sentence is not the learner's guide to the words, let him read it backwards after he has read it forwards. As in the succeeding lessons of Section first, only new words that have not appeard in previous lessons, are given in large type. Let the words of one lesson be learned thoroughly before leaving it for another, and let them be often reviewed as the child advances in the order laid down.

"While this simple process of learning to read is going on, put a pencil or piece of chalk into the child's hand, and let him begin to copy, however rudely, the forms of letters and entire words. He may thus make some progress in learning to spell before he knows the alphabetical names of letters, and indeed,

this is the best and shortest process for acquiring a knowledge of spelling, which may always be attained more accurately by sight than by sound.

"It is not till he enters upon section second that the learner is introduced to the analytical process of spelling. And here it is recommended that he be taught to decompose words into their elementary sounds before giving the alphabetical names of the letters. Let the word be pronounced *before* and not *after* it is spelled. Let the letters be pronounced as nearly as possible with *the sounds* they possess in combination. In communicating the 23d lesson, let the letter *o* be written on the black-board. The sound of it is then given by the teacher, and the children repeat it after him either individually or simultaneously. The first consonant is then written—the teacher gives its true sound or power, and the children then do the same. The consonant and the vowel are then sounded and the word is pronounced. The remaining words are then treated in a similar manner. Each child should be furnished with a slate and pencil and be made to copy as well as he can the letters and words that may constitute the lesson for the day.

"After the pronunciation of the words, and of their elementary sounds, has been thoroughly learned, the children may be required to spell the words at the head of each lesson, by giving the alphabetical names of the letters. But this process may be better reserved till the child is somewhat advanced. It will be found a good exercise for the teacher to name a letter in a word and require a child to give its sound in combination, or to give its sound in combination and require the child to give its alphabetical name."

Thus, the county and town superintendents would have the pupil master, at least, two elementary reading-books before the spelling-book is placed in his hands. He is then to learn to write, after which he is to write the spelling lessons upon his slate instead of studying them from the book by the eye. It will be observed that the pupils are to write their lessons at the dictation of the teacher, after which they are to change slates and, with the aid of the teacher, review the lesson. But I am happy in being able to infer that the pupils are permitted to know the names of the letters composing the words which they are required to write, which I deem a decided improvement on some more modern theories.

This system, to say the least of it, would be a slow way to learn to spell and read, and whatever little child enters upon such a course is doomed to spend a large part of his earthly existence, provided he lives to the common age of man, in learning to read and spell. It is true, some may live through this process and may know something about spelling, but most of them who survive will need to carry a dictionary with them while they live.

My heart sickens at the sight of the thousands of helpless innocents who are sacrificed upon this worse than heathen altar.

Fathers, mothers, guardians of youth, will you not see to it, that those who are dependent upon you are saved from this ruinous, wasteful course of study? Are not the health and precious years of youthful time nothing to *you?* Do not say that you cannot avoid it. The means are now within your reach. Then put forth your hands and labor in this good cause. Open your mouths and speak for the *dumb*, the helpless innocents whom God has given you, and placed under your guardian care, and your children will rise up and call you blessed.

It would seem that Mr. Webb has made an

effort to improve the preceding system or method of instruction above noticed. But I am unable to see in his system, as a whole, that improvement which we might have reasonably expected. He does not begin by first teaching the letters; he discards the use of a spelling-book as such. He does not claim that his system advances scholars rapidly; he thinks we should be content to know that we *are advancing.*

I hope the reader will examine for himself the preface and notes in full in Webb's Normal Readers, Nos. 1 and 2, and his series of Readers in full. There is much ability and energy manifested by the author throughout, superior taste in selecting and arranging the reading exercises, and I have only to regret that the direct system was not fortunate enough to find as able an advocate as it might have done in him. But for all practical purposes in their widest sense, for teaching children to spell and read, I consider it too intellectual, and slow of progress to meet the wants of childhood.

Where is the propriety of first teaching a child words as a whole, *as an animal*, before he knows the letters, or attempts to learn them? Or the advantage of teaching him words by

the sounds or powers of letters composing the words, while he is a stranger to the words, to the elementary sounds composing the words, and to the alphabetical names of the letters?

My fixed opinion is that our children, under such a system of instruction, would need the intellect of a Locke or Byron, the physical energies of Hercules, the patience of Job, and the assistance of a learned professor, in order to succeed at all in learning to read *tous ensemble.*

The method for teaching the young as laid down by Mr. Sargent in his Standard Primer, and Standard First Reader, is, that the pupil be taught at first words as a whole and not unmeaning letters and syllables, teaching him the alphabet after he *has learned to read*, and when you wish to teach him to spell. The rapidity of acquirement under this system may be inferred from the earnest exhortation made by the author to teachers. He says, "Do not, at first, task the memory too much, but be content with very humble beginnings. If the whole lesson cannot be learned at the first trial, let half of it, or a *single word* suffice." And here we may observe, that the word-lessons, as laid down in the book, are very small, frequently no

more than half a dozen words, and sometimes less. These are to be learned as a whole, and in addition to this, the pupil must learn to write, and write down the words of the lesson with a pencil, or a piece of chalk; but where he is to make this entry is not sufficiently clear. He is then to be introduced to the analytical process of spelling, that is, to decompose words into their elementary sounds, and all this before he is supposed to know the alphabetical names of the letters. After the pupil has thoroughly learned to pronounce or spell words by their elementary sounds, he may be allowed to learn the alphabetical names of the letters, and spell the words accordingly. But this process is recommened to be delayed "till the child is somewhat advanced."

"Till the child is somewhat advanced." As much as to say, the child has not as yet advanced at all, or in so small a degree as not to be called *somewhat.*

"*I thank thee Jew for teaching me that word!*" I will rest here. There is no need to say more. This is enough to show the working of the system, and that is all I wish to show. I think it is truly and well expressed in little space. If any are not satis-

fied, let them make an actual experiment, but I pray you do not take my little son or daughter for that purpose; let them be excused.

Hear it, fathers, mothers, children. All ye who have any interest in learning to read—ye who have sympathies for your fellow-men. From Maine to California—from Labrador to Alaska. A child after going through one book of seventy-two pages, and another to the eighteenth page, and that in some cases by taking one word for a lesson and frequently reviewing lessons, by reading the words backwards, as well as forwards. And yet after all this toil and labor, are not "somewhat advanced."

Thus it seems that Mr. Sargent's system of primary instruction is nothing more than a learned rehash of Mr. Webb's, the additions made thereto by requiring the pupil to learn to write, and write his lessons before he is supposed to know the alphabetical names of the letters, making it still more difficult to perform.

If this is a desirable system to be used in our schools, I hope it will prevail; I only wish the public to have a good system; when this is obtained I am content.

"Hope, like a cordial innocent, though strong,
Man's heart at once inspirits and serenes."

So let us hope there is a good time coming, when the capacities of the youthful mind will be better understood by educators than they are now, and when they shall be able to devise some method of instruction better suited to meet the wants of children than any that are now in general use, and when this system may be so known and perfected as to be a blessing to all who learn to read. For the sake of humanity may this good time come speedily.

"The eternal law of Progress bids us On."

At the annual meeting of the New York State Teachers' Association, held in the city of Oswego, August, 1854, it was said by Prof. Marcius Wilson, in a speech to that body, the subject being "Practical Education," that as yet there was no *direct method* known* to teach spelling and reading. He thought it would be a very important discovery; hoped, though rather despairingly, that such discovery would yet be made.

* I attended that meeting for the purpose of making known what I conceived to be this very system, but could get no opportunity of doing so.

Now, it is plain to my mind, that the first step to this important discovery is a better knowledge of the peculiar capacity of the youthful mind. I think, as yet, it has not been well understood. When this is accomplished, the discovery of a direct system of instruction will be rendered comparatively easy.

From a practical experience of over thirty years in teaching children, I have learned a little of what really constitutes the mind of childhood. For many years of my first practice, I scarcely gave the subject a thought, but like others around me, I endeavored to flatter or urge these almost helpless innocents up the hill of science to the utmost of my power, on the same principle that I would persons of maturer years. And even when I had made some useful discoveries in this direction, I have been held back from advancing or adding to them as I might have done, had not educators and teachers, with whom I have conversed freely for twenty years, been so cold and indifferent on the subject.

It would seem that they are in a fair way to continue to thrust their almost impractical systems of primary instruction down the throats of an over credulous people forever.

The projectors of those systems could never carry out their own plans practically, had their numbers been sufficient to have supplied every schoolhouse in the Union. They have wisely left them to the PATIENCE and ENDURANCE of WOMEN, without which they would be totally impractical, and would, long ago, have fell into disuse.

I consider that it is reasonable, that those who do the work should invent the modes by which to accomplish it.

But as yet there has not arose a Fulton, a Watt, a Guttenberg, or an Arkwright among COMMON school teachers, to make that improvement in their calling, that has been witnessed in other professions.

I believe that the following, in a qualified sense, may be considered *truisms* respecting children.

1. They are not reflective, and their reasoning faculties cannot be relied upon, as the *modus operandi* in their education.

2. They are possessed of infinite powers of OBSERVATION and IMITATION, which are the most perfect at this period of life.

3. They remember what they see, hear,

and do, MEMORY being as perfect, and in some respects more so than at any subsequent period.

4. They are seldom wearied in talking on subjects that do not require extensive reflection.

5. They delight in talking much, provided they can produce the subject mainly of themselves. Hence they delight to read, even to them, meaningless words by their letters and syllables, probably for the mere pleasure of utterance.

6. When properly aided to so read words, they will be able in a short time to pronounce at sight, and spell words to an infinite extent.

7. When able to so recognize words, they can read books, and thus learn the meaning of most words by association, provided they understand the vernacular language in which they are written.

APPENDIX.

In the course of a very extensive reading on the subject, I have not been able to find but a very few desultory hints that coincided with any idea of Direct Teaching. I shall here subjoin the following:

Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of New York, 1855 (*page* 48).

"Observation and reason teach that they (children) are not fit at so early a period (four years of age), for the *study* of books. Nearly all they know before they are eight years of age they learn from the example of superiors' oral instruction, and from observation and examination of things around them."

Sargent's Standard Primer (*page* 2).

"But do not explain over much. Remem-

ber that a child must be taught to take many things on trust, and to believe a thing is so because you say it is so."

Sargent's Standard Primer (*page* 60).

"A child learns to spell by the eye in reading, more than in any other way."

Sargent's Standard First Reader (*page* 3).

"Children learn to recognize words almost as imperceptibly as they learn to utter sounds, and do not pass through much analytical reasoning in the process of doing so. A little patient exercise of repeating the sound of the word in connection with its sign, is sufficient to make a child familiar with the word when he sees its symbol."

Sargent's Standard Second Reader (*page* 5).

"It is not recommended that the attempt should be made to level every sentence and word in a reading lesson, to the immediate and entire comprehension of the child. This would be impracticable. 'What blockheads,' says Robert Southey, 'are those wise persons who think it necessary that a child should comprehend everything it reads.'"

The *London Quarterly Review*, speaking of the education of children, says:

"The *reason* is cultivated at an age when nature does not furnish the elements necessary to a successful cultivation of it, and the child is solicited to reflection when it is only capable of sensation and emotion."

Fowler, on Memory, had a partial view of the direct system of instruction; and although I am an incorrigible unbeliever in Phrenology as a science, I am certain its able expounder speaks many truths about the intellectual powers, that are worthy of profound attention. It was not till after I had taken my manual to my publisher, that I had the pleasure of reading Fowler on Memory. The following extracts are so in accordance with my theory of instruction, that I transcribe them with pleasure; on page 37th he says:

"So constituted is the human mind, that whatever is seen is forever riveted on the mind. Description fails to impress, but OBSERVATION fastens what is seen upon the other faculties, as it were BRANDING it into their very texture. Thus one minute's ocular inspection of anything, say the human scull, makes and leaves an impression incalculably more vivid and retentive than worlds of books, or years

of description could possibly effect. A law of mind requires things to be SHOWN, and insists on observation. Children or adults can be taught mechanics, natural science, anatomy, phrenology, and every species of knowledge, many hundred per cent. more speedily and effectually by OBSERVATION than by all other means put together. The human mind easily remembers HOW things appeared, and thus readily recalls whatever is associated with these appearances. Man was made to SEE, and must see effectually to progress in knowledge, and mental attainments."

Speaking of the observation of children, on page 41, he says:

"In them, too, more than in adults, observation conveys instruction more vividly and practically than all other means put together. With what avidity they seize every book containing pictures, and ask to be told about them. Indeed, their looking instinct is too strong, too unequivocal, too universal to be mistaken. Nor was it created for naught. Nor should it be overlooked in educating that mind, of which it forms so great a part. Indeed, all education should acknowledge and be formed upon it, because observation is their great highway to knowledge. It should not then

be hedged up, but opened wider still. In fact, as all education of mind should be conducted in harmony with the *laws* of mind, educated, and as observation is a PROMINENT law of the juvenile mind, therefore they should be taught by OBSERVATION MAINLY, till this has developed both *memory* and *reason*. How quickly they learn from seeing and being shown, but how slowly from books and descriptions! This is a palpable universal FACT, based in a LAW OF MIND.

"This being thus, of course existing systems of education require to be remodelled, so as to become adapted to the cardinal law of mind, or rather based upon it, yet they almost universally violate it. Instead of developing observation they actually repress it, not even allowing it its natural action. They thus CRAMP what they should develop, and do a positive damage instead of good. They actually curtail observation, and thereby weaken this faculty so all-essential to intellectual advancement. How many of us, readers, have been rebuked or chastised, because we looked around the schoolhouse, or out of its windows. Thump came the ruler on our heads, or crack the birch over our backs, because we looked off the book, with the stern mandate and

threat—keep your eyes on your books, or I'll flog the skin off your backs. Gracious heavens, humanity flogged for trying to see. Not for what was bad, but merely for looking —as well chastise for breathing. Almost as well stop respiration as OBSERVATION, for the latter is quite as essential to intellectual life and growth as breathing is to physical. The fact is thus palpably apparent, that education is begun at the wrong end, and conducted erroneously throughout."

Page 43.—"Let us COMMENCE their education by showing and explaining things. Shall we longer confine them to the study of things which they have not yet the faculties to comprehend. As well put the blind to selecting colors and the deaf to learning music. Granted this proposed remodelling of existing educational systems is a bold innovation, and would demolish that idol to which parents cling as to their children themselves, and on whose altar millions are now falling a sacrifice, both physically and mentally, yet it is based in the two incontestable FACTS that individuality is one of the first developed and most active intellectual organs of the young, so that their OBSERVATION should be the leading instrumentality employed in their education."

(*Page* 44.)

"OBSERVATION MUST PRECEDE REASONING.

"If this new but true doctrine require additional confirmation, it has it in that constitutional method by which the human mind arrives at most of its conclusions. Reason without fact can teach very little. Could mere reasoning ever have discovered, or can it even now perfect phrenology or any other science? Unaided by experiment, can it teach us that motion is the function of muscle, sensation of nerve, vision of the eyes, etc., or that heat can be obtained from trees, that water will quench thirst, food satiate hunger, stones thrown up fall down again, etc., etc. By a law of mind observation must PRECEDE reasoning. After we have tried these several experiments several times over we may then infer that like causes produce like effects. This inductive method of observing FACTS FIRST, and then ascending through analogous facts up to the laws that govern them, is the only sure guide to CERTAIN TRUTH. The only safe method of investigating any of the operations or laws of nature. Now the juvenile mind is an adult mind in miniature, only that this inductive method of

gaining knowledge appertains to the juvenile even more than to the adult. The former are compelled by the inflexible law of mind to learn MOST that they know from OBSERVATION, FOLLOWED indeed by reason, but never by the latter first or mainly. Then, let this inductive lesson be taught at first, and even constitute the main education of childhood. Then, should not education be at once remodelled accordingly? It WILL be thus remodelled. Fifty years, probably twenty, will see this fundamental change effected and demolish the present system, though thus thoroughly riveted upon the affections of parents and teachers. Strange that all the interests felt and labor expended upon schools should not have both detected and remedied this fatal error. It is too palpable and fatal to be tolerated much longer."

Page 49.—"Moreover we never have any occasion to know how to spell words except when they are put on paper, or in order to put them on; that is, where FORM can be employed in spelling them. This method of learning to spell is also far superior in ease as well as durability to the present method of learning to spell by rote, as to demand the substitution of the former for that of the

latter. In other words, FORM is the NATURAL organ for reading and spelling, and therefore children should be taught at first to read and spell by means of the APPEARANCES of words instead of as now, by rote. Language or rote may assist, but should be altogether secondary, whereas now it is PRIMARY. This course will enable us to REMEMBER what we have learned, whereas now how few of us even, after having served a five years' spelling and reading apprenticeship, however expert we may have been as scholars, can spell correctly an ordinary page of a letter or even many common household words! What greater practical condemnation of the present system could be had than the miserably poor spelling of nearly all, even after all the pains taken?

"The reason is this: we learn to spell BY ROTE, by the JINGLE, and this is forgotten soon after we leave school, whereas we should learn to read and spell by the EYE, by the appearances of the words, which as it is a law of mind easily to remember, the looks of what we have seen would enable us to learn much more easily, and then RETAIN what we learn. By adopting the change here proposed, children could learn to spell in less than half the

time now consumed, and retain it twice as well, a four-fold advantage, and in one of the most important of matters where the time and labor-saving principle, now so advantageously applied elsewhere, can possibly be employed. If this proposed change would enable children to learn what they now do in one-fourth the time now consumed, and employ the balance either in gaining health and growth by play, or in learning three times as much as now—BEHOLD ITS VALUE."

THE END.

14 May 1859

CHART OF THE MENTAL POWERS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY ARE DEVELOPED IN THE LIFE OF MAN.

DURATION OF THE LIFE OF MAN DIVIDED INTO THREE PERIODS.

1 PRIMARY.	OBSERVATION—Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling.	
	MEMORY—Retaining the knowledge of past events or ideas.	
	IMITATION—The act of following in manner—speaking whatever is heard, and acting whatever is seen.	
2 INTERMEDIATE OR ACADEMIC.	RECOLLECTION—The act of recalling to the memory.	
	CONTEMPLATION—The act of the mind in considering with attention.	
	EXAMINATION—A careful search or inquiry with a view to discover truth or the real state of things. Trial by a rule or law	
3 BUSINESS.	CONCEPTION—The power of the mind to conceive ideas. View or opinion—apprehension. Knowledge.	
	IMAGINATION—The power of modifying our conceptions. To select the different conceptions or objects of memory.	
	REASON OR JUDGMENT—That faculty of mind by which we compare facts with each other, and mental impressions with external things.	

This exhibit of the intellectual powers makes it plain in what manner we should introduce instruction to children; we should commence with those faculties which they possess, and not with those which are developed in the last period of life.

Reason is the last intellectual faculty to be developed.

I leave it to teachers and parents to make their own comments.

Here is a vast field for contemplation.

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AND

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS'

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THE Subscriber has formed, in New York, a "Ministers' Library Association:" and, under the sanction and direction of the Association, the SERMONS of the Rev. ROBERT WALKER, with Introduction by Dr. CHEEVER; and Rev. JOHN LOGAN, with Introduction by Dr. WHEDON, have been published. Other works will be published from time to time, such as the Association shall approve, and none others. The Subscriber, with the assistance of his friends—entirely distinct from the Association—assumes the pecuniary responsibility of the enterprise; the moral and literary responsibility being with the Association.

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Rev. C. J. HOPKINS, *Sec., N. Y.*

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tion, and direct the pen. The adversary they fought was Satan. They lost sight of all opposition and controversy but to war with the powers of darkness, and to oppose sin. With the vivid images of the lost writhing in eternal pain, and an undying desire to see them reconciled and raised up to God, were these soul-stirring sermons produced. The likeness impressed on their hearts is found living and blooming on these sermons, and must find its way to and fire the heart of every godly man that reads them. We present them to the Christian public, with the sentiments of the distinguished divines who have given them their highest approval, believing that they will be of great and lasting usefulness.

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Pastor of Jane street M. E. Church.

New York, *Sept. 24th*, 1854.

PITTSFIELD, *Sept. 5th*, 1854.

REV. N. TIBBALS, *Astoria, L. I.*

MY DEAR SIR: I am glad to learn that the Ministers' Association in New York, think of re-publishing some of the genuine old Scotch theologians, particularly the writings of JOHN LOGAN and ROBERT WALKER. These are wells of pure and cooling waters, refreshing and purifying to those who draw faithfully from them.

Yours truly, JOHN TODD.

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ALEXR. T. MCGILL,
Professor of Pastoral Theology, Church Government, Composition, and Delivery of Sermons.

PRINCETON, *Oct.* 13, 1854.

I have been accustomed from early life to read LOGAN'S Sermons, particularly as the effusions of a beautiful and highly gifted mind. They are by no means wanting in evangelical sentiment, or in fervent and impressive appeals; but as specimens of polished and graceful composition, I think the Scotch pulpit has rarely, if ever furnished anything superior.

ALBANY, *Sept.* 15, 1854. H. B. SPRAGUE.

WALKER was of the section recognized as the Evangelical, and his sermons have by some theological professors been recommended as among the safest and best models of evangelical preaching.

WM. R. WILLIAMS.

NEW YORK, 11*th Oct.*, 1854,

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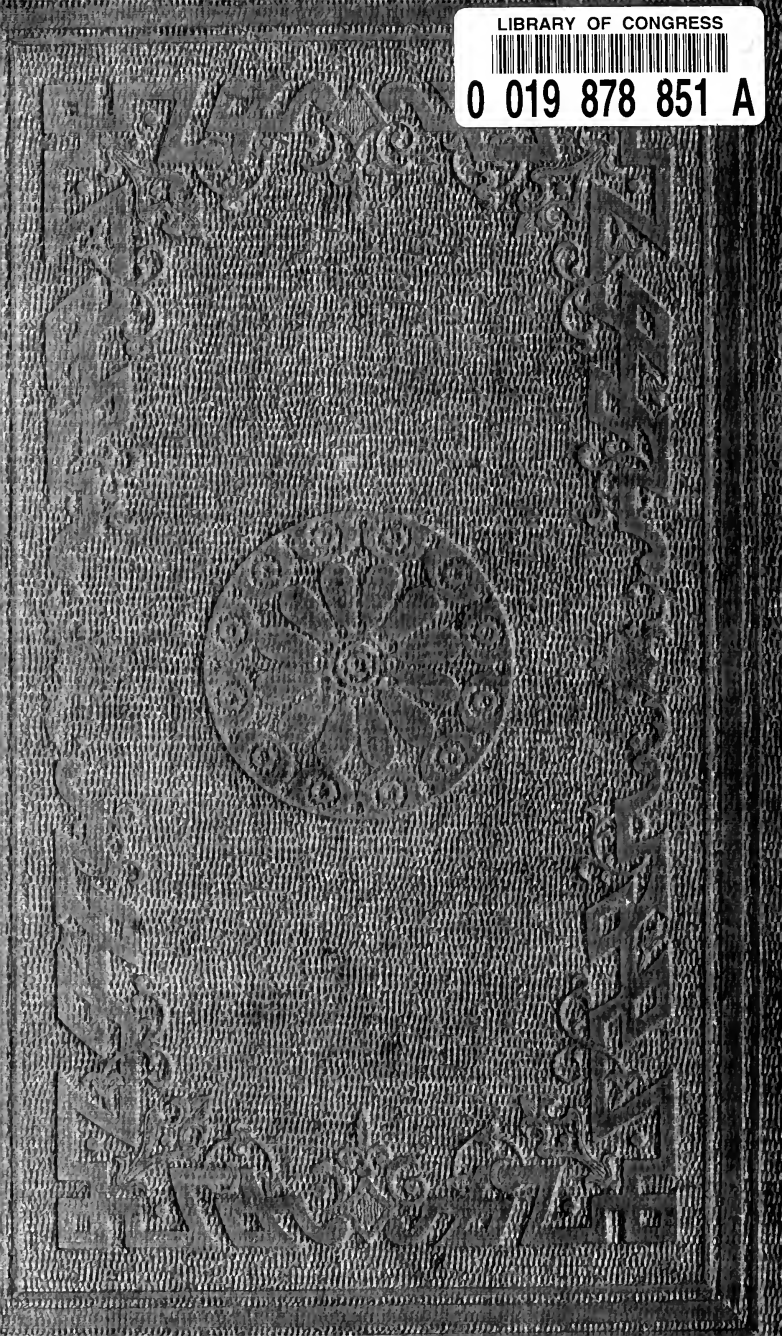
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